

100% AUSTRALIAN PSX MAGAZINE WITH DEMO CD



PlayStation

The Official Australian PlayStation Magazine

ISSUE 2 SUMMER 97 \$10.95 NZ \$12.95 Inc GST

Tobal #1

BETTER THAN
TEKKEN 2?

PREVIEWS:
PORSCHE CHALLENGE
TWISTED METAL 2
MECHWARRIOR 2
SOUL BLADE

COMMAND
& CONQUER
PC STRATEGY ON PSX

TOMB RAIDER
NOT ANOTHER PLATFORM GAME

PANDEMIONUM
PURPLE TIGHTS SAVE THE WORLD!

DESTRUCTION DERBY 2



NO CD?
ASK YOUR NEWSAGENT



9 771327 255008



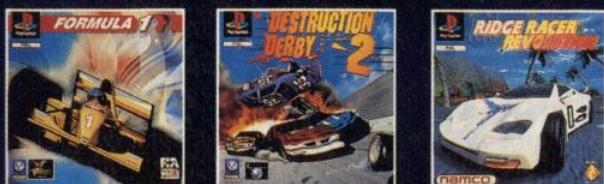
have YOU experienced the POWER of PlayStation™?

have
YOU
experienced
the
best
life
has to
offer?

The text "have", "YOU", "experienced", "the", "best", "life", "has to", and "offer?" is composed of numerous small, semi-transparent screenshots from various PlayStation games. These images include scenes from sports games like NBA Jam, racing games like Gran Turismo, and other titles like Final Fantasy VII and Metal Gear Solid.

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aggressive tendencies



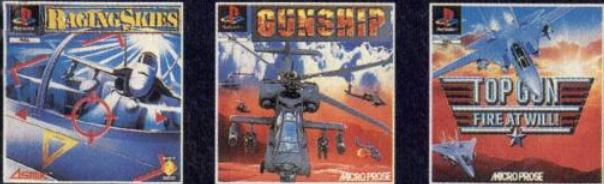
varying degrees of beat 'em up expertise that will leave you gasping for air

psychotic tendencies



a brutal range of games that provide plenty of nervous tension

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a massive adrenaline rush in your lounge room...just plug in & fly

For Hints'n Tips call the PlayStation Powerline 1 902 262 662

Classifications are: Formula 1 - G, Destruction Derby 2 - G, Ridge Racer Revolution - G, Tekken 2 - M15+ Medium Level Animated Violence, Street Fighter Alpha - M15+ Low Level Animated Violence, Battle Arena Toshinden 2 - M15+ Medium Level Animated Violence, Resident Evil - MA15+ Medium Level Animated Violence, DOOM - MA15+ High Level Animated Violence, Loaded - MA15+ High Level Animated Violence, Raging Skies - G8+ Low Level Animated Violence, Gunship 2000 - G8+ Low Level Animated Violence, Top Gun Fire at Will - G8+ Low Level Animated Violence, Total NBA '96 - G, NFL Gameday - G, Namco Prime Goal - G, Wipeout 2097 - G, Motor Toon Grand Prix 2 - G, Namco Museum Volume 1 - G, Broken Sword M15+ Low Animated Violence, AIV Evolution Global - G, Myst - G, Crash Bandicoot - G, Jumping Flash 2 - G, Earth Worm Jim 2 - G8+ Low Level Animated Violence.

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PlayStation

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this is a good guess!

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A deranged jester.
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Pandemonium

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**CRYSTAL
DYNAMICS™**



Better than Tekken 2?

Sony Computer Entertainment Japan has announced that 10 million PlayStations have been shipped out of the factory as of November 30, 1996. The territory breakdown is as follows:

Japan - 4.2 million
USA - 3.45 million
Europe (including Australia) - 2.35 million

One of the questions that Capcom didn't want to answer in our interview (see p. 76) was "Will there be a 3D version of Darkstalkers?" to which they replied "No comment." So does this mean that there is a 3D Darkstalkers planned that Capcom wants to keep under wraps, or is there just simply nothing to comment on? We'll leave it to you to decide!

SCE Australia has entered into the competitive sport of 18 foot skiff racing. The Sony PlayStation skiff is crewed by Daniel Slater, Matthew Stetchman and Edward Smythe and they'll be competing in the Oracle Grand Prix Circuit over the summer 1996/97 season. We wish them the best of luck and you can catch the televised races on Channel 7 and Foxtel.

That's the question we're asking on the cover as Square Soft's *Tobal No.1* bursts onto the scene, hot on the heels of Namco's *Tekken 2*. *Tobal No.1* actually does offer something new in terms of gameplay and is so far the closest to being a realistic 3D fighting game. As with *Tekken 2*, there's a lot more to the game than first meets the eye. But while *Tekken 2* offers hundreds of special moves that take ages to discover, *Tobal's* wealth is in the subtlety of the combat.

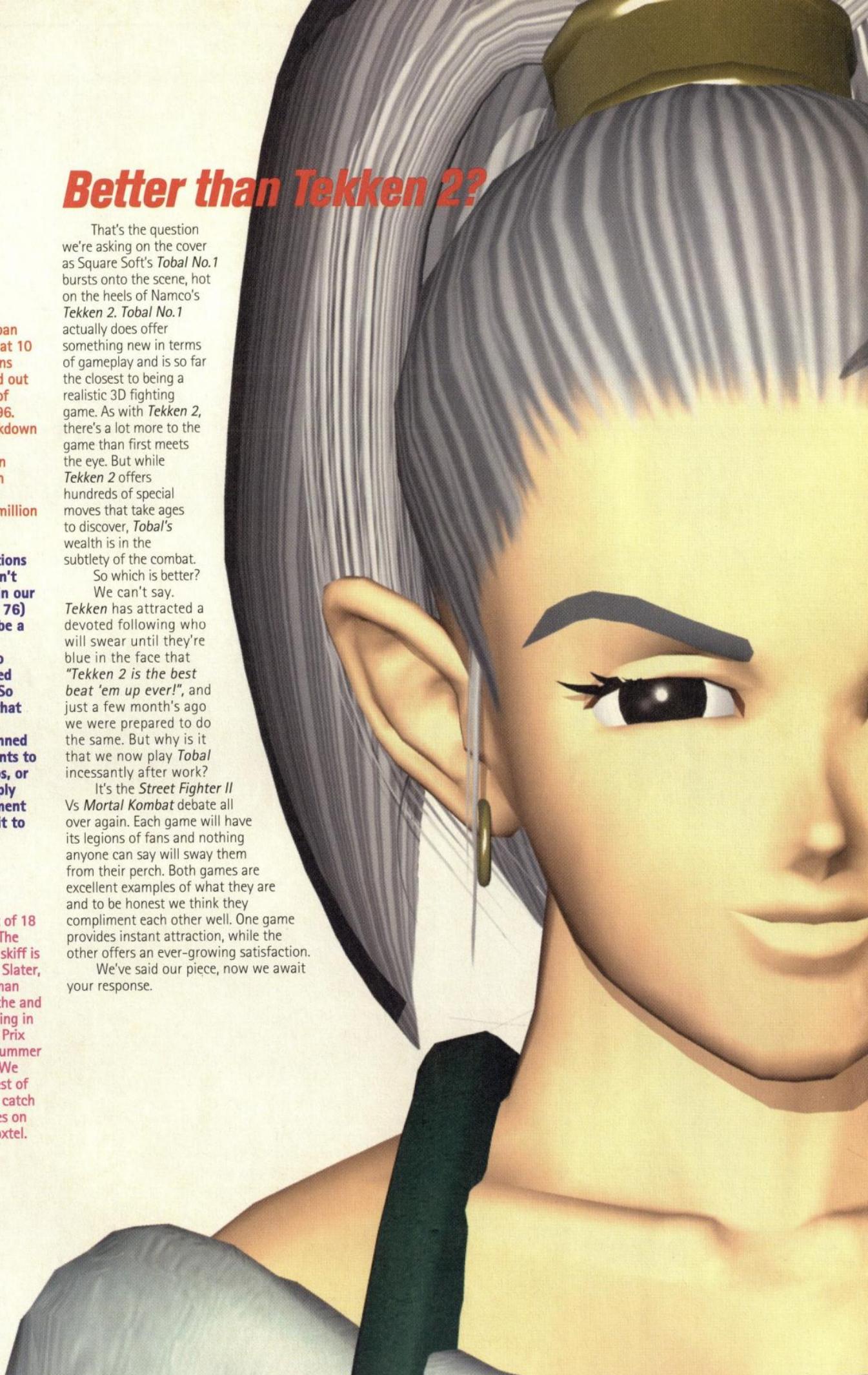
So which is better?

We can't say.

Tekken has attracted a devoted following who will swear until they're blue in the face that "*Tekken 2* is the best beat 'em up ever!", and just a few month's ago we were prepared to do the same. But why is it that we now play *Tobal* incessantly after work?

It's the *Street Fighter II Vs Mortal Kombat* debate all over again. Each game will have its legions of fans and nothing anyone can say will sway them from their perch. Both games are excellent examples of what they are and to be honest we think they compliment each other well. One game provides instant attraction, while the other offers an ever-growing satisfaction.

We've said our piece, now we await your response.



**WARNING
THIS GAME IS ON FIRE**

Tekken 3



The first sightings of Namco's keenly awaited *Tekken 3* took place recently at the AM Expo in Hong Kong. A 30% complete version currently in development was on display and initial impressions were favourable. *Tekken 3* is believed to utilise an upgraded version of Namco's powerful System 11 arcade hardware and it's rumoured that the PSX version will use a plug-in device of some kind that will allow for a near-perfect arcade translation. Don't expect to play it at home until at least 1998.

Can you make our eyes bleed?

Wipeout 2097 is the hottest racing game available, it's one of few games that we actually enjoy sitting down to play after a hard day at the office. It's also one of the best games to try to beat your best times in, so we're giving you the opportunity to prove how good you are to the rest of the world.

Send in a photo of your fastest overall race time at Phantom level in either of the two final Phantom tracks. The best times for each circuit wins you a cool *Wipeout* T-shirt.

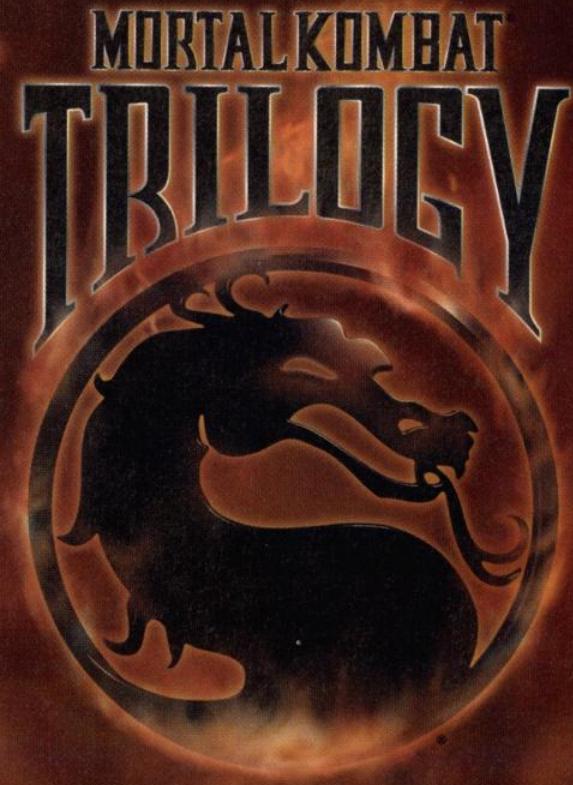
This could well be an on-going competition so there's no need to hurry, keep practicing until you feel you have an unbeatable time then send it in.

Take a photo of the records screen and make sure we can read the times on the photo, take a few steady pics and don't use a flash. Alternatively, send us your memory card for verification and we'll send it back immediately.

Send your entries to:
"Bleeding Eyeball comp"
PlayStation Magazine,
PO Box 634, Strawberry Hills, NSW 2012



Don't bother entering unless you can come close to Dan's Phantom times. Good luck!



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Time Crisis

Namco is certainly keeping itself busy with the arcade conversions coming to the PlayStation. Next on line is *Time Crisis*, in which players use a light gun to take out the terrorists who are no doubt about to take over the world. What distinguishes *Time Crisis* from other arcade light gun games is the "duck" foot pedal which allow you to hide behind walls and solid objects in the rooms. The PlayStation version will be accompanied by the official Namco light gun, but it's not certain how the foot pedal will be implemented. Most likely is that there'll be a button somewhere on the gun which will allow you to get out of the way when necessary. An early version was previewed recently at a PlayStation exposition in Japan and the game and gun should be available in Australia soon.

Psygnosis is to remain a subsidiary of Sony Computer Entertainment following a decision to halt the sale of the Liverpool (UK) based software developer. Sony has been trying to sell Psygnosis for several months, partly because it felt it was losing control of its premier PlayStation developer which has continued to produce games for other formats including PC and Saturn. Bids up to US\$300 million were reportedly coming in from companies such as Marvel Comics, but all were refused. Although it is still owned by Sony, Psygnosis will continue to remain an independent developer and has plans to expand its worldwide operations.

Samurai Shodown fans disappointed by the poor version of SS3 will be interested to hear of a new *Samurai Shodown* title coming to the PlayStation in Japan. It's not SS4, which is currently in development for the arcades, but a compilation containing the first two games. *Samurai Shodown II* is widely regarded as the best of the lot and a proper conversion to the PlayStation would be greatly appreciated. No news of an Australian release, though, but we'll keep you posted.



New analogue feedback controller

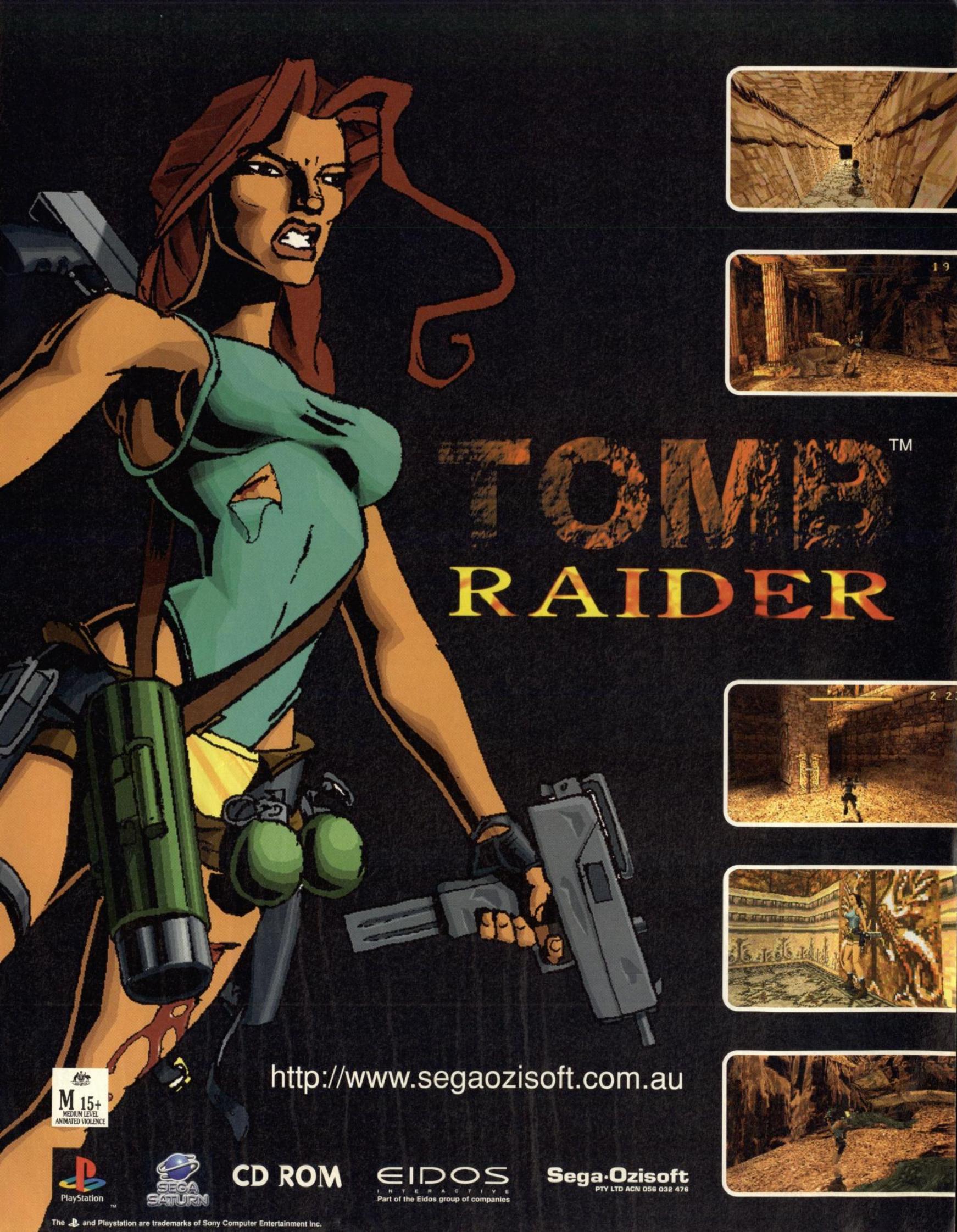


Sony has a new analogue controller on the way to the PlayStation and it's looking very funky, indeed. Shaped like the regular pad, this new one has two extra thumb pads which offer progressive control and provide active feedback. This means that your actions in the game result in

the thumb pads 'fighting back', for example in driving games when you're cornering at high G-forces the pads will be pushing back against you.

Active feedback is an important part of many arcade machines but this is the first time it's been made available to console owners. The feedback

feature won't work with all games, only those programmed to take advantage of it, but apparently it's not too hard and we hope to see a high level of support from game developers. There's still no word of when it's going to become available, but later in the year seems a good bet.



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Black PlayStation development kit

Big Sony TV Comp extension
Our competition in the first issue to win a 68cm Sony Trinitron TV, a PlayStation, a Negcon Analogue controller, a copy of *F1* and a T-shirt has been so popular that we're offering an extension for new readers to get their entry in. The final cut off date is January 31, 1997 and the winner will be announced next issue.
O: Who's voice features in the game Formula 1?
Send your entry to the usual address.

Competition Winners

The Mad Catz steering wheel comp attracted literally thousands of entries but there can be only one winner. Congratulations Aaron Emmerson of Joondalup, WA.

The adidas power soccer comp proved to be no less popular and the winner is Kevin Wood of North Manly, NSW.

Subscription Winners

Tony Davey of Auckland, New Zealand and Susan Sharrock of Alice Springs, NT are the two subscribers who each won a pack of five PlayStation games from Sony.



So, you think you know what it takes to make a good game? Sony thinks you can, and to back this up they've released a special black PlayStation development kit for amateur programmers.

Known as "Yarze", the black PlayStations are aimed at people who are serious about making games and requires an understanding of programming in "C". The US\$750 price tag may well keep it out of reach of general consumers, but it's a veritable bargain compared to professional work stations costing in the tens of thousands of dollars.

Sony sees Yarze as a way of cultivating a new generation of programmers who would otherwise not have the opportunity to try their hand at making games. If you are seriously interested in Yarze head to Sony's web site on the internet at: www.scee.sony.co.uk

"I'll tell you about my mother!"

"We've seen things you people wouldn't believe" And we don't mean attack ships on fire off the shoulder of Orion. We're talking about the teaser of the forthcoming *Blade Runner* game included on Virgin's killer new PC title *C&C: Red Alert*. The short rendered sequence is produced by Westwood Studios, the software house responsible for the ground breaking *Command & Conquer*. So why are we telling you about a PC game? Well, apparently there's a PlayStation version in the works, fingers crossed, and news of any game officially based on the cult film is pretty damned exciting in itself. Hopefully we'll have some more info soon.



Fifa '97

Arriving too late to make it into this issue for review, *FIFA '97* came into the office and all work ceased immediately. To be honest, we weren't expecting much more than a facelift and updated teams and stats for the '97 soccer season, but what we got is a whole new game.

It's hard to know where to start, but basically everything about *FIFA '97* has been vastly overhauled. The graphics are simply delicious, with all the players being made up from highly detailed polygons and the animation is superb. The game is also a lot harder to play against the computer and you'll find yourself having to work hard for every goal.

Yes, it's a jolly good game and don't listen to any nonsense spouted by some American web sites that say the game is crap. What do Yanks know about soccer, anyway! Needless to say we'll have a full review next issue.



**“RULE WITH ME.
ALONE YOU WILL COMMAND.
TOGETHER WE WILL CONQUER.”**



011321

WARNING
SECURITY SYSTEMS NOT RESPONDING

“OH, AND BRING A GUN!”



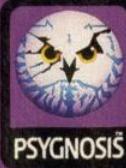
AVAILABLE ON SEGA SATURN AND SONY PLAYSTATION
DECEMBER 1996

ANTICIPATED RATING M15+



An audience with

Sam Stewart



Destruction Derby



Destruction Derby 2



Formula 1



Monster Truck Rally



Wipeout



Wipeout 2097

Sam Stewart is the new boss of Psygnosis' Australian office. Between mouthfuls of a delicious roast beef roll, we asked him for his thoughts on the future of his new company and its place in the scheme of things. Pass the mustard, please.

PlayStation Magazine: Why did you decide to join Psygnosis and where did you work previously?

Sam Stewart: Having been involved with Playcorp (Metro Games) in building up distribution of Nintendo and PC software for the last 10 years, I knew I wanted to get involved in the publishing side of the business. The opportunity to represent Psygnosis in Australia was a dream come true.

PSM: Are you a real game player yourself? What sort of games do you enjoy playing?

SS: 'Real'? When I find good software, I still get an adrenalin buzz, so I guess I'm a player at heart. My favourites are simulation, strategy and adventure games, but I love multi-player games and I find some fighting games like *Tekken 2* incredible.

PSM: Psygnosis has recently had a number of high quality games, can you keep this up or will we see a quiet period? How will you follow titles like *F1* and *Wipeout 2097*?

SS: All publishers have their ups and downs, our recent successes have been due to having very strong products on the PlayStation and its success worldwide. I believe we are the strongest publisher on this format and will remain so for some time. When you set the standards on any genre, it's up to you to break them and set higher standards. We'll have more leading edge driving games in future.

PSM: What do you see as Psygnosis' strengths and weaknesses?

SS: Arcade style simulations have definitely been our strength and these have been most suitable for the PlayStation, our PC software releases have been quiet as a result. We are

aware of this and have been working to rectify it, the results are due shortly with the PC releases of *DD2* and *Discworld 2*.

PSM: Will Psygnosis continue to rely on independent developers, such as *Bizarre (F1)* and *Reflections (DD2)*, or will it move toward more in-house development? Are there any plans to set up a Psygnosis in-house development studio in Australia?

SS: We are the largest in-house programming group in Europe, but we still use some outside development, I believe this will continue in the future. There are a number of quality software houses already in Australia which we have been dealing with, but anything could happen further down the track.

PSM: Psygnosis develops games for two main formats, PlayStation and PC, and this naturally encourages them to make games which can be converted to both platforms. Do you see this as detrimental to the games, in that the full capabilities of each machine can not always be exploited as the lesser machine has to be able to handle the conversion without too many modifications?

SS: There are some products which are suitable for conversion and others that are not. The quality of the final product is also dependant on the hardware it is being played on. We all know about the graphics handling capabilities of the PlayStation, in some cases when converted to PC this has seen slowdown due to the CPU requirements. I believe as a result some of these games have suffered, not necessarily because of the quality of the software, but sometimes due to the expectations of the user with an under powered system.

PSM: What is your view on PC games being converted to the PlayStation?

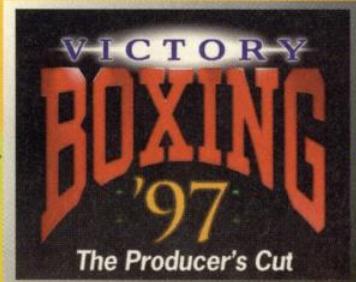
SS: I believe that certain formats suit particular types of games, the PlayStation is ideally suited to driving, flying and fighting games, and in future 3D adventure games. Traditional 2D adventure products haven't performed well to date on this platform. Full on simulation products raises the issue of whether players want to go in this direction. Arcade has been the style to date, I hope the PlayStation player will evolve to experiment with new styles that PC players have been enjoying for a long time.



These games are yet
to be classified by
The Office of Film
and Literature
Classification Board.

The Big K.O. (in) games this summer, OK!

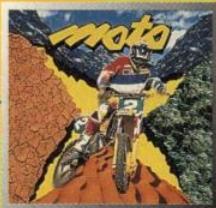
93% TOTAL
PlayStation Magazine



JVC



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F Y F I L A B L E N D W

COMPETITIONS

It's summer at last, the time for going to the beach, having a barbie in the back yard and winning heaps of cool stuff from The Official Australian PlayStation Magazine!

The Usual Address:

Name of competition
PlayStation Magazine
PO Box 634
Strawberry Hills
NSW 2012

Competition rules and entry conditions:

- 1). The competitions on these two pages (pp.18-19) are open to all residents of Australia and New Zealand.
- 2). All entries must be received by Friday, January 31, 1997.
- 3) Employees of Next Publishing and the relevant participating sponsors are not permitted to enter.
- 4). The judge's decision is final and no correspondence shall be entered into.

Commie Killing 'Copter Comp



Electronic Arts is offering six readers each the chance to win a copy of the awesome helicopter shoot 'em up Soviet Strike!

This is without a doubt the best 'copter carnage game on the market and you have the chance to winch one aboard for free!

Simply read the review on page 34 and write down the answer to this easy question on the back of an envelope and send it to 'Commie Killing 'Copter Comp' at the usual address.

Q: Where does the first mission take place?

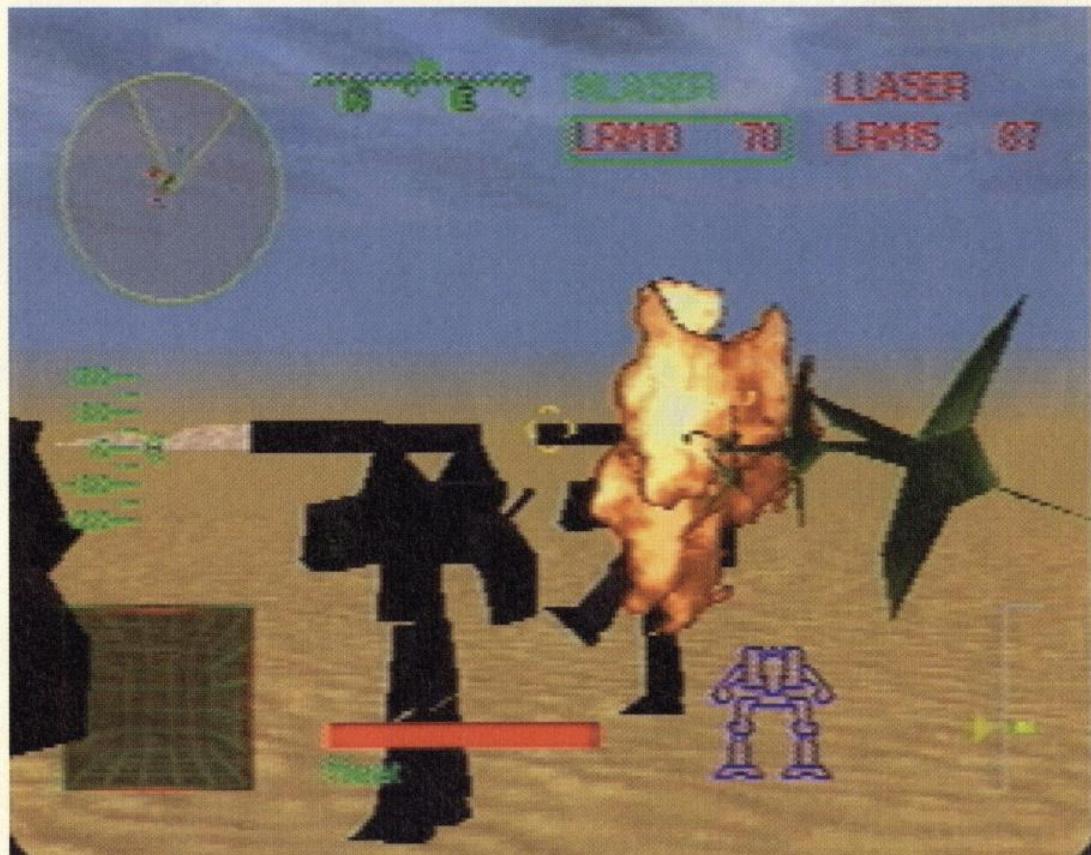
Mechwarrior Mayhem Comp

Activision has kindly provided us with six copies of the forth-coming PlayStation conversion of Mechwarrior 2 to give away to six lucky readers!

Mechwarrior 2 is one of the coolest "walk around in a heavy steel suit smashing stuff" games on the PC and the eagerly awaited PlayStation version is on the way.

You know the drill, write down the answer to the following question on the back of an envelope and send it to 'Mechwarrior Mayhem Comp' at the usual address.

Q: Name one of the allegiances you can side with in Mechwarrior 2



Make my Day Comp



There's a steadily increasing number of light gun compatible games coming to the PlayStation over the next year and until the official light gun is available we suggest you investigate the Predator light gun from Logic 3. The Predator gun boasts auto-load, auto-fire and many other useful features to give you that extra unfair edge against the hordes of terrorists and invading aliens. We've got two Predator light guns to give away and if you

want to win one of them you'd better answer this question quick smart!

Q: Name one game which you can use a light gun with.

Write your answer on the back of an envelope and send it to 'make my day Comp' at the usual address.

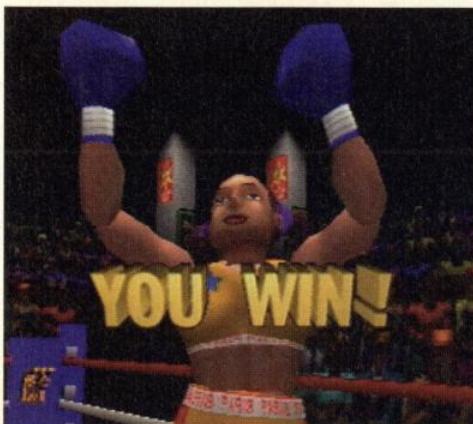
Warner Interactive Comp

Warner Interactive is offering one reader the chance to win a pack of six current titles for the PlayStation. The winner will receive a copy each of:

- Victory Boxing
- International Moto X
- Pitball
- Hyper Tennis
- Impact Racing
- Supersonic Racers

Q: Who does the promoter in Victory Boxing bear an uncanny resemblance to?

Read the review, write the answer on the back of an envelope and send it to Warner Comp at the usual address. Life can be so simple when you want it to be.



Crash your party!

Sony Computer Entertainment, in conjunction with Coca Cola™ and Mars™ are offering to throw an exclusive party just for you and your mates!



Crash Bandicoot himself will come around to your home loaded with all plenty of PlayStation goodies and games for you, with ten copies of his game Crash Bandicoot for lucky party-goers!

He'll also bring his own TV set and extra PlayStations for the duration of the party so you can have a massive link-up session with him and your mates!

And for munchies there will be plenty of Coke and Mars Bars to go around and Sony Computer Entertainment will also provide pizzas for you and your guests to scarf down.

To be the winner of this cool competition, all you have to do is draw a single page picture of Crash doing something funny. It doesn't matter if you're not a good artist, but the important thing is that your idea is funny. Crash will be selecting the winning entry himself, so try to impress him with your sense of humour.

Send your entry to: Crash Comp, PlayStation Magazine, PO Box 634, Strawberry Hills, NSW 2012

Conditions of entry:

- 1) This competition is open to all residents of Australia.
- 2) Entries must be received by last mail on Friday, January 31, 1997.
- 3) No employees of Sony Computer Entertainment or Next Publishing are eligible to enter.
- 4) Crash, the TV and his PlayStations go back to Sony after the party.
- 5) The judge's decision is final, so no crying if you don't win.

Mars

Enjoy
Coca-Cola



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M15+
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ANIMATED VIOLENCE

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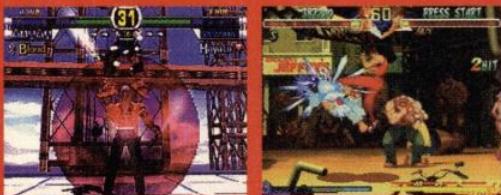
WIN WIN WIN!



Virgin Interactive
and Manga Video are
offering two splendid
prize packages to readers of
The Official Australian
PlayStation Magazine.

Are you bored this summer?

Need something to keep you entertained and out of mum's hair? How about something along the lines of PlayStation games from Capcom, Manga videos or a new PlayStation!



1st Prize:

1 Sony PlayStation
1 copy of Star Gladiator
1 copy of Street Fighter Alpha 2
1 copy of Darkstalkers
a selection of six Manga Videos

2nd Prize:

1 copy of Star Gladiator
1 copy of SF Alpha 2
1 copy of Darkstalkers
4 Manga Videos

"Aaahhh!!! WHERE DO I SIGN UP?!" is probably what you're thinking at this point in time, but it's not quite that simple... You're going to have to work for these goodies!

The answers to these following questions will be obvious to all hard core beat 'em up fans and there are plenty of clues throughout this issue if you read it thoroughly.

1. Name one character from the first Street Fighter II game who has returned to appear in Street Fighter Alpha 2.
2. Name a secret boss from Star Gladiator.
3. Which is the spunkier super babe from Darkstalkers; Felicia or Morrigan?

Conditions of entry:
1) This competition is open to all residents of Australia and New Zealand.
2) Entries must be received by Friday, January 31, 1997. 3) Employees of Virgin Interactive Entertainment, Siren Entertainment and Next Publishing are forbidden to enter.
4) The judges decision is final and no correspondence shall be entered into.



Write down the answers to these three easy questions on the back of an envelope and send it to:
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The Official Australian PlayStation Magazine



SONY

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A MYSTERY FROM THE DISTANT PAST THAT
HAS THE POWER TO AFFECT THE FUTURE.

WHAT SECRETS LIE HIDDEN WITHIN THE
ORDER OF THE KNIGHTS TEMPLAR?

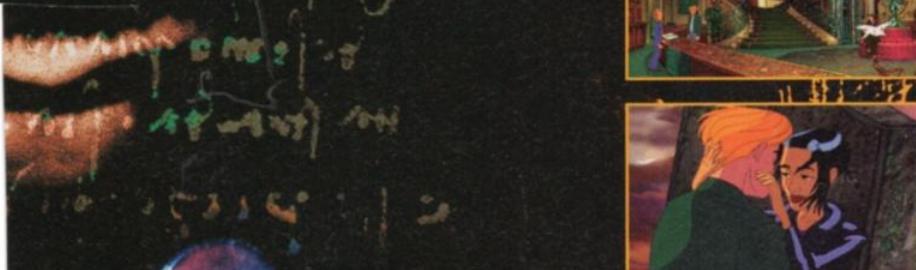
NOW ON PLAYSTATION



Broken Sword

THE SHADOW OF THE TEMPLARS

ANTICIPATED CLASSIFICATION OF 6B+



"AS FAR AS ADVENTURE GAMES GO,
BROKEN SWORD HAS ONE OF THE MOST DRIVEN,
COMPELLING PLOTS OF ANY YET EXPERIENCED..."

SPECIAL UK PLAYSTATION MAGAZINE

9 OUT OF 10

Mouse
Compatible

For ultimate game control,
we recommend the PlayStation mouse.
Available NOW \$49.95 rrp.



Reviewed in this issue...

Official Australian PlayStation Magazine Ratings Guide

Every game featured in our Play Test section has been reviewed independently and objectively by our team of writers. We aim to give you an informed idea of what the game is about and, most importantly, whether it's good or bad.

Each title reviewed receives an overall score out of 10 which should be seen in the context of the type of game and in relation to similar titles it's competing with. For example; a score of 7 is high praise for a 16-bit style 2D platform game, whereas a 3D fighting game receiving the same score is by no means sub standard, but indicates that it could have been better when seen next to the likes of *Tekken 2* and *Tobal No. 1*.

Additionally, the following factors are awarded up to five stars

Graphics

- Does the game look good and has it taken advantage of the technology?

Sound

- CDs give developers the potential to create mind blowing audio. Have they?

Gameplay

- This is what it boils down to. Is the game any good to play?

Lifespan

- Will you still be playing the game next week or next year?

Originality

- Does this game offer anything new or is it a clone of last month's hit?

10 - Exceptional, in a class of its own!

9 - High quality game, strongly recommended

8 - Well above average, more than worthy of attention

7 - A good game with little to complain about

6 - A bit on the average side, but not at all bad

5 - Not quite as good as it could have been

4 - This is not what you bought a PlayStation for!

3 - Oh dear, something has gone horribly wrong...

2 - Don't bother, a waste of both time and money

1 - Impress your friends with a cool black drink coaster!

Difficulty: A rough idea of the degree of difficulty to expect when you initially play the game, however most give you the option to tamper with the skill level.

Players: Number of players supported. Any more than two and you'll need a Multitap four-player adaptor, unless...

Link-Up: Two PlayStations and (usually) two copies of the game are required. And don't forget the extra TV.

Control: The standard joypad works with all games, although many recent titles take advantage of analogue devices (Negcon, Mad Catz) or the PlayStation Mouse.

Memory Card: Some games require a memory card to save secret things and newly discovered levels or circuits. Other games provide you with a password to jot down.

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Head to Head

We compare a selection of similar games to help you decide which one is the right for you

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- Street Fighter Alpha 2
- Mortal Kombat Trilogy

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- Power Play Hockey
- Face Off
- EA NHL '97
- Open Ice

Golf (SA) - page 70

- PGA Tour '97
- Actua Golf
- Virtual Golf

Gridiron (AB) - page 72

- Madden '97
- NFL Game Day

Tennis (TS) - page 74

- Namco Smash Tennis
- Davis Cup

PlayStation

The Official Australian PlayStation Magazine

Review team

Andrew Iredale

is the editor of this magazine. And I have to write reviews as well!

Amos Wong

is a polite, well spoken you gentleman who harbours a fetish for exotic anime.

Nick & Tim Smith

are brothers with a shady past - they used to work for Sega! But we won't hold that against them now, will we?

March Stepnick

is a hardcore game freak who supplements his meagre income writing about his favourite subject.

George Soropos

has an affinity for PC games, but guess what was at the top of his wish list to Santa? Okay, so the PlayStation was second to Uma Thurman!

Stretch Armstrong

enjoys a good sport game. Well, nobody else wanted to do the golf games!

Adrian Bertram

plays the clarinet in his spare time and hosts a scary late night radio program.

Destruction Derby 2

The streets are becoming increasingly unsafe these days, what with all those hoons speeding around in their fast cars. Wherever do they get such ideas?

PUBLISHER:	Psygnosis
DEVELOPER:	Reflections
DISTRIBUTOR:	Psygnosis
RELEASE:	Mid January
PRICE:	\$99.95
GAME TYPE:	Driving
DIFFICULTY:	Tough
NO. OF PLAYERS:	One
LINK UP:	No
CONTROL:	Analogue
MEMORY CARD:	& password
CLASSIFICATION:	G



Destruction Derby 2 has great graphics and spectacular smashes. What it doesn't have is a two player game. But it's still a lot of fun on your own.

When *Destruction Derby* was released as one of the initial line up of games for the PlayStation, it quickly became the best selling title on the format. What self respecting Aussie rev-head could pass up the chance to take the Saturday night smash 'em up at the speedway home? Unfortunately, *Destruction Derby* sold on the title rather than on the strength of the game. While it was fun for a while, it had two main flaws which soon became apparent: 1. The limitations of the tracks and sloppy control of the car; and 2. There were no port-a-loo races. With the sequel at least one of these concerns has been addressed, but sadly it's not the lack of dunny racing.

With *Destruction Derby 2*, the original has been given a major overhaul, so much so that you could almost call it an entirely new game, rather than the derivative sequel it really is. *DD2* sports major improvements to the gameplay mechanics, car handling, track design and graphics to give it all the ingredients it needs to become an instant classic.

There are three main modes of racing; Wrecking Racing, Stock Car racing and the popular Destruction

Derby bowls. The first two games are relatively similar with each offering the choice of practice, time trials and championship races. In Stock Car races the objective is to win the race through skilful driving rather than just bashing your way through, although this will still happen so you are allowed to utilise the pits to repair damage to your car. Wrecking Racing, on the other hand, actively encourages you to drive like a Bat Outta Hell and points are awarded for sending the other cars spinning.

Then there is the awesome *Destruction Derby*. This is another game altogether, with no track to follow; it's just you against everyone else in a bowl, with the winner being the last car left rolling. There are now four separate destruction bowls with features such as mounds to launch off and even one with a sheer cliff drop-off that spells instant death to any car pushed over the edge - if you last more than 60 seconds in here you're doing extremely well!

Each of the seven tracks (three are accessible only after winning the others) has its own style of scenery fitting to the location and most have some quite interesting features. Huge spectacular raceways with wide lanes suddenly

squeeze into a bottle neck, banked corners lead into hills from which you can launch off and subtle imperfections on the track surface can send you up onto two wheels!

It's this variety that makes *DD2* so compelling to play. Even after losing countless races to the wickedly fast computer drivers, you still have the urge to try for that perfect 180° drift out of the jump to land facing the right way into the hairpin. When you finally make it, a rush of elation surges through your to your ego at the mastery of man over machine you've just displayed.

Players accustomed to the wild dynamics in games like *Ridge Racer* and *Wipeout* will at first find themselves slamming into barriers uncontrollably, as measured use of both the accelerator and brake is necessary to get ahead - If you hope to slide gracefully around corners you have to ease off the juice and dab the brakes at precisely the right time - while not forgetting to take a clean driving line through the corner.

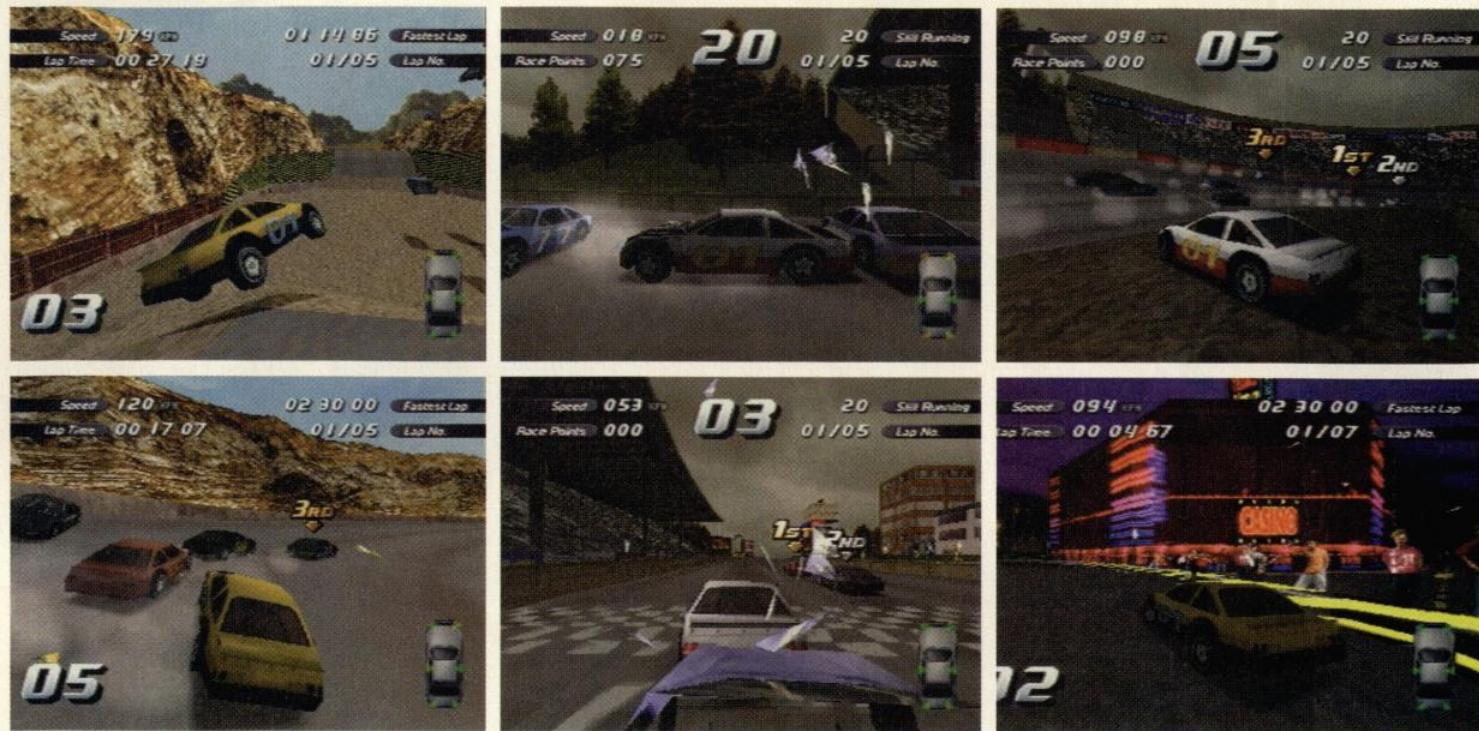
Such is the attention to realistic handling that each car now has independent suspension. The chassis rocks as you fly over hills and sways from side to side as you speed through



These days a game just can't get by without a pre-rendered intro. In *DD2* we see a semi delivering the cars to the race track.



There are now are number of wild and crazy new destruction derby bowls, inculding one with a cliff edge to push the other cars off!



Despite all its improvements, DD2 is basically more of the same. Which is good if you loved the first game, but if you didn't you still may not like it. Horses for courses, and all that.

chicanes. Apply the anchors and the car lurches forwards convincingly. When the bodywork cops a hit parts fly off in all directions and you can even lose wheels and keep driving, at least in a handicapped sort of way.

In the original game when you struck another car, it would get bashed back or perhaps spin around a few times. One thing they never did was to leave the ground, but here you may spend just as much time in the air as you do on the track. When you strike a car, or are struck yourself, the vehicle sails up into the air, spinning and flipping, only to crash down and bounce onto its side and may even end up on its roof! Luckily when this happens to you the car is restarted in the correct orientation once you come to rest, although this can take some time when

the other cars keep bashing you around!

The blockiness of the original cars has been given a much smoother finish and the clever use of shading plays an important factor in the car's realism. When you travel through a tunnel, the lighting over the cars adjusts accordingly. With the improved resolution, the detailing is immaculate, from the paintwork to the crumpling of body parts.

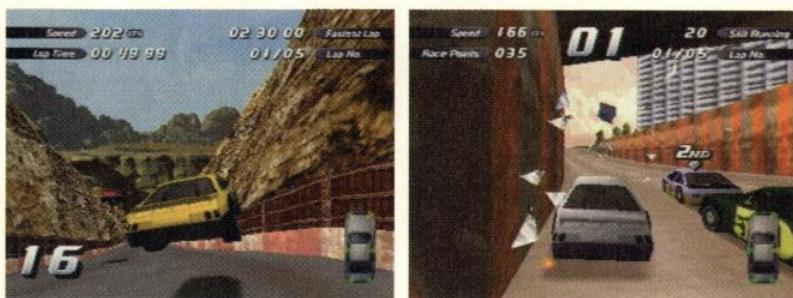
The sound is loud, grunty and obnoxious - just what you would expect from a car race of this calibre. The engines emit a coarse roar and the impacts are a confusion of crunching noises. You'll be happy to know that a real American motor sport commentator (the enthusiastic Paul Page) now makes the calls instead of the lack-lustre Pommie actor in the first game.

The game itself is fast and highly challenging. To win any race you'll have to be an accomplished driver and master the Pro car, the others just aren't fast enough. It takes a fair bit of practice before you're fully comfortable with the cars, and the opposition is more than unforgiving - some of the drivers will even go out of their way to ruin your day! You'll know the meaning of intensity when you have 15 cars hurtling themselves through a narrow bottleneck at 200mph with bits and pieces flying off in all directions!

A vast improvement over the original, *Destruction Derby 2* is an extremely polished game that offers enough thrills to ensure that it will not stray far from your PlayStation.

One bad thing...

Sadly, there is one vital area in which *DD2* is lacking, namely a two-player mode. A split screen mode was out of the question as the hardware is busy reading the track data off the CD while the game is running, and it can't read from two locations at the same time. A link-up facility is technically possible and was incorporated on an early preview version of the game, however it was unable to be included on the final version due to deadline constraints. This is the only real drawback and is especially disappointing for if ever a game screamed out for a multi-player option it's this one.



Hit the crest of a hill at warp speed and you'll get sick air! (left) Car + Wall = Crunch! (right)

■ GRAPHICS:	★★★
■ SOUND:	★★★
■ GAMEPLAY:	★★★
■ LIFESPAN:	★★★
■ ORIGINALITY:	★★★

Faster than before and the cars are well defined
Bang! Crash! Smash! "You're roadkill!"
Instant thrill factor and loads of fun
Offers plenty of scope to develop your driving skills
Expands on the old game quite considerably

■ OVERALL: *Destruction Derby 2* is everything the first game should have been. Its looks and controls are much improved, though the lack of a two-player game is a major bummer.

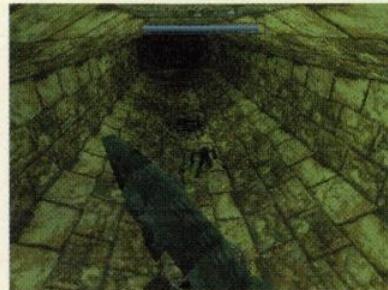
8

OUT OF TEN

Tomb Raider

Step aside Indiana Jones, there's a new girl on the block who's making your adventures seem like a cub scout jamboree! Her name's Lara and she's got a much cuter butt.

PUBLISHER:	Eidos
DEVELOPER:	Core
DISTRIBUTOR:	Sega-Ozisoft
RELEASE:	December
PRICE:	\$99.95
GAME TYPE:	3D adventure
DIFFICULTY:	Hard
PLAYERS:	One
LINK-UP:	No
CONTROL:	Joypad
MEMORY CARD:	Yes!
CLASSIFICATION:	M15+



Lara meets lion. Lion eats Lara. Grrrr (left). Don't flush unwanted pets down the dunkey (centre). There's never a taxidermist when you need one (right).

The much maligned platform game genre is by no means a new concept. From *Prince of Persia* to *Quake*, game developers have been striving to elevate it above the 'run to the right and jump on the baddy's head' routine. *Tomb Raider* is the most recent outstanding effort in these stakes and has pretences to be the King (make that Queen) of platformers.

This is a game of exploration set in some of the most fascinating areas of the world. You assume the role of Lara Croft, adventurer and treasure hunter extraordinaire. Lara, who has built a not-so modest fortune recovering the treasures of the ancients, is a cross between Indiana Jones and Ripley.

Lara's travels and troubles start with

a job offer to obtain the fabled Atlantean Scion, a mystical device of great powers. After finding the first piece, it is stolen by a rival treasure hunter and from here it's a race against time as she sets out to find the remaining two parts of the Scion. As the game unfolds, she soon discovers why she was approached to locate the artefact, but her ultimate discovery is the answer to one of the great mysteries of civilisation.

Her search begins in the Peruvian Alps combing the ruins of an ancient temple and there are four main locations to explore. After South America, Lara's quest takes her to ancient Rome, then to Egypt, and finally you uncover one of the world's greatest

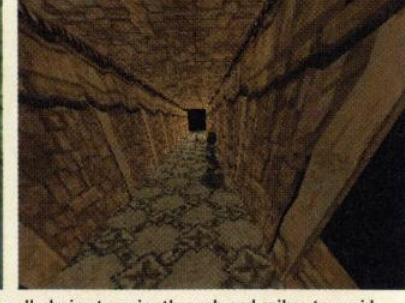
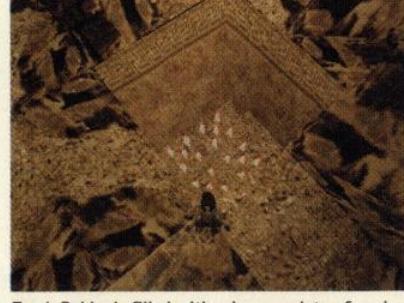
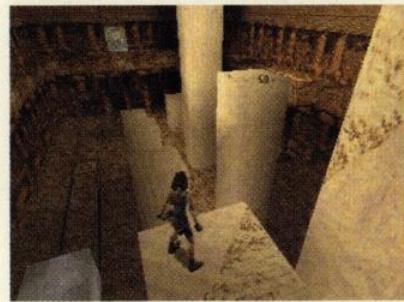
riddles - the Lost City of Atlantis.

Traversing the caverns is no easy task as there are many obstacles to climb, jump and dodge. It's fortunate that Lara has an abundance of acrobatic moves in her repertoire. The main button that you will use is the action button. When this is depressed, Lara will perform many tasks such as picking up items, pulling and pushing blocks and levers, as well as defending herself with good old fashioned fire power.

The jump button, when pressed in conjunction with the directional pad, makes Lara leap forwards, backwards, up and even sideways, and when you are in the air the action button allows her to catch onto the edge of ledges and then



There's more to Tomb Raider than just a great game. There's a plot, too, and it's played out in glorious pre-rendered FMV sequences.



Tomb Raider is filled with a huge variety of environments. There's gaps to jump, blocks to push, levers to pull, drains to swim through and spikes to avoid.



The mobile camera allows Lara to see areas that are otherwise out of her sight and in this game it's definitely wise to look before you leap.

haul herself up. Among other actions, Lara can also perform quick barrel rolls that turn her about face, as well as being able to tip-toe one step at a time whenever you fear danger lurks ahead.

Many of the caverns and chambers are interlinked via drains and aqueducts and Lara, being an adept swimmer, can effortlessly swim from place to place. She can't stay underwater for too long, for once her lung capacity is exhausted her energy level starts to decrease at an alarming rate.

To protect herself from savage beasts (and savage humans), Lara has come prepared, packing two pistols which have been thoughtfully loaded with an unlimited supply of ammo. When drawn they are automatically aimed at up to two different targets simultaneously, provided each is roughly in her line of sight. In addition to the standard pistols, Lara can find different weapons hidden throughout the levels, each with varying power. There's the shotgun, Uzi and Magnum waiting to be discovered, but ammunition for these is strictly rationed.

As far as the bestial inhabitants are concerned, there are bats, wolves, lions, bears, crocodiles and even giant rats to contend with, however these are not the only inhabitants of the catacombs, as Lara will soon discover!

Tough as nails she may well be, however Lara is by no means invincible and her quest may end prematurely in any of the following gruesome ways - falling from too great a height (hear her legs snap), getting caught in a booby trap or spiked pit (not an instant nor pleasant death), drowning (glug glug glug... twitch) or by being finished off by an attacking enemy (chomp chomp, etc.).

As *Tomb Raider* is viewed from a third-person perspective following behind Lara, it can sometimes be difficult to see exactly what lies around the corners. To remedy this you can take control of a free-floating camera that allows you look over her shoulder, down

precipices, in fact in any direction Lara would realistically be able to look in from her current position.

Getting through the game involves thorough and extensive exploration of all surroundings and you'll be craning your neck to see what's next. Among the beautiful scenery and exotic locations are many puzzles to solve, usually in the form of hidden switches that reveal secret passageways. Other obstacles for Lara to deal with are huge blocks of stone which can be pushed and pulled in and out of walls, thus revealing further passages and switches. There are also particular objects and keys that are needed to open locked areas.

The soundtrack adds immensely to the already eerie atmosphere present throughout the game, but apart from the occasional dramatic interlude heralding an area of importance, there is no continuous music to accompany Lara on her quest. Rather than detracting from the game, the long periods of silence serve only to heighten the suspense. There is little to match the chill that races up your spine as the sudden growl of a hungry carnivore rumbles from the darkness!

The graphical detail is awesome, to say the least. Within five minutes of starting the game, the whole office was standing around like slack-jawed gawkers at a messy car accident and people who had previously shown no interest at all in video games were totally mesmerised. However, what is more impressive is that the graphics aren't just there to look good, they actually form an integral part of the game.

The textures covering all the surfaces are cleverly designed so as not to appear at all repetitive and this facet plays an important part in the way you play the game. Not every room has an obvious entry point and exit, and in the caverns and caves it can be very easy to become disorientated. Often you'll think you've come to a dead end, only to

discover after much effort that the way out was staring you in the face all the time - not in an obscure way, but simply because it has been so well disguised in the design.

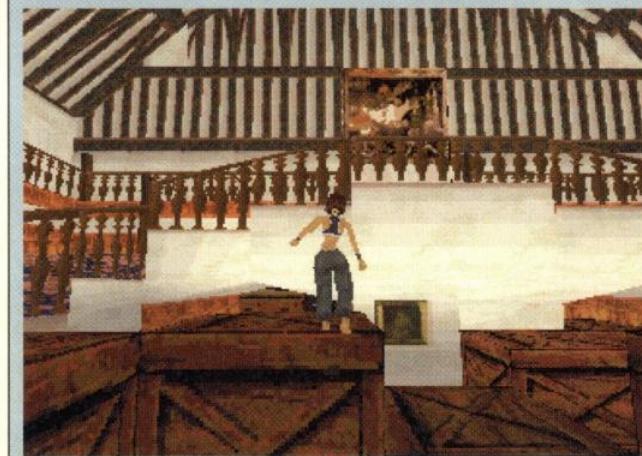
Destined to become an instant classic, this is the 3D game you've been waiting for and *Tomb Raider* doesn't fail to impress. You'll find yourself thoroughly enthralled, not only by the intriguing storyline, but at the wondrous visuals. Quite simply, this is a superb blend of brilliant graphical design and thoughtful action, with plenty of puzzles that will cause you many a sleepless night. *Tomb Raider* will challenge your perception of what a platform game should be - miss it at your peril!

Alternatives

Alternatives? Are you kidding?! *Tomb Raider* has been compared to *Resident Evil*, although it offers far more freedom. *Jumping Flash* is the only other 3D platform game we could think of, but it still doesn't come close.

Lara's House

If you are adventuring as Lara for the first time you may want to take the opportunity to familiarise yourself with the controls. In her not so humble abode, you can practice the various rolls, leaps and evasions essential if you plan on getting anywhere in the game. Lara will guide you through each move with her dainty English accent and you can continue practicing until you are satisfied you can handle the real world.



■ GRAPHICS:	★★★★★	Never has a game used graphics to such a tremendous effect
■ SOUND:	★★★★	Builds the atmosphere perfectly, but some effects lack punch
■ GAMEPLAY:	★★★★	Control is a little stiff, but allows a high degree of freedom
■ LIFESPAN:	★★★★	You'll have no life until you've completed the game!
■ ORIGINALITY:	★★★★	It's a platform game, Jim, but not as we know it

■ OVERALL: Rarely does a game immerse you in its environment so thoroughly, *Tomb Raider* is a masterpiece of design and has set the standard for all 3D action games to come.

9
OUT OF TEN

Star Gladiator

If stylized Japanese super heros are your cup of tea, be prepared to dunk your biscuits big time when you see Capcom's latest beat 'em up, straight from arcade to your PlayStation!

PUBLISHER:	Capcom
DEVELOPER:	Capcom
DISTRIBUTOR:	Virgin Interactive
RELEASE:	Out now
PRICE:	\$99.95
GAME TYPE:	Beat 'em up
DIFFICULTY:	Easy
PLAYERS:	One or two
LINK UP:	No
MEMORY CARD:	Not Needed
CONTROLLER:	Joypad
CLASSIFICATION:	M15+



Star Gladiator features an impressive rendered intro sequence detailing nefarious schemes of the evil boss.

Alternatives

Tekken 2 (9/10, issue #1) is current reigning God of 3D fighting games and Toba No. 1 offers a wealth of subtle delights, although Star Gladiator's fighting style is more along the lines of Soul Edge or Toshinden 2, with less emphasis on learning special moves.

Whenever a company comes up with a new innovation, a slew of new and even more incredible and realistic imitations emerge. Since *Virtua Fighter* and *Tekken* burst onto the scene we've been immersed in the next generation of 3D fighting games and nowadays it seems that the flat 2D fighters we know and love are becoming a thing of the past. *Star Gladiator* is Capcom's first beat 'em up to feature graphics made from polygons and is presented in a similar pseudo-3D perspective as *Toshinden* and *Tekken*. So how does this game set itself apart from the rest of the pack?

Instead of the normal hand to hand fighting, *Star Gladiator* has its combatants battling it out with an array of weapons, each being unique and distinctive to the fighter who wields it. From the fairly standard cutting implements such as the light-sabre of Hayato and the massive battle axe of the Wookie-like Gamof, there are other more unorthodox hand to hand combat tools like the robot Vector's laser gun, June's slicing rings and cone-head Saturn's killer yo-yos!

Star Gladiator has all the standard

type options you expect in a fighter game. Arcade Mode is the one-player option that pits yourself against the computer controlled opponents, and Vs Mode is obviously the two-player game. As originally seen in *SFII*, Group Battle Mode allows each team to pick five characters and fight it out in one round fights and the 'recovery type' option determines how much energy is replaced after each match. The Training Mode allows you to learn all the moves without being humiliated by the computer and through this you should be able to pick up a few moves to remember thanks to the display which shows the button path required for each move. There are options available during training mode allowing you to determine whether the computer controlled opponent returns your attacks or only guards.

The fighters each have their own standard and secret moves executed by button sequences on the control pad. Instead of multiple types of punches and kicks (high/low & weak/heavy), they have two attacks with their weapons; a vertical and horizontal slash, a kick and also a guard. Special move combos can also be

performed by tapping repeatedly certain strings of attack buttons, but unfortunately they are really easy to uncover through the practice mode, and more often than not you'll get a move out by frantically pressing all the buttons as fast as you can. Attacks can be dodged by darting left or right with the shoulder buttons, but jumping should be left for finishing off stunned opponents as it's slow and leaves you vulnerable to attacks if you miss your target.

The fighters are decorated beautifully with texture mapped detail and they move realistically and fluidly, with no jerkiness evident during the animations. Similarly, the backgrounds are without a doubt some of the most spectacular you'll see, whether it's on the top of a huge spaceship with clouds flying beneath your feet as you fight or at the scene of a space graveyard with debris floating around you, the atmosphere in each stage perfectly fits the futuristic tone of the game. Another really nice effect is the killing stroke, when you knockout your opponent with your final move, a dramatic lights flashes in its path.

The music varies from inspired



It's the spectacular moves that make *Star Gladiator* such a great game to watch. Brilliant flashes of light streak out whenever a killing stroke is delivered.



Some of the special moves send the characters flying (left). The first boss Bilstein drives his blade into the prone Zelkin (centre). Hayato has trouble fending off his blue-haired clone (right).

ambient space music in some stages to cheesy Japanese video game muzak in most of the others, but the production values are above average and it kind of suites the garish colours of the game. The sound effects are predictable but not too bad; the cool clanging sound of the weapons against each other fits in well, as does the bizarre rantings and utterances of some of the aliens, but otherwise it's nothing special.

Capcom has been synonymous with top notch gameplay in beat 'em ups of the past, with *Street Fighter* residing as its long established flagship title. However, *Star Gladiator* is its first foray into this style of graphics and it would

appear that it is the testing ground for the forth-coming 3D *Street Fighter* game. Flashy graphics and smooth gameplay make it one of the most impressive looking beat 'em ups to date, but there really isn't much in *Star Gladiator* that hasn't been done before and connoisseurs of fighting games may be disappointed by the limited nature of the fighting and the lack of skill required to perform the special moves. If *Tekken 2* is an iron fist in a velvet glove, *Star Gladiator* is wearing one of Michael Jackson's sequined numbers. It looks great and has some very funky moves, but it isn't backed up with a strong enough challenge to last the distance.



Taste the fury of my Plasma!

Plasma Reverses are good methods of counter attacking, making a one sided battle a little more interesting when the odds are against you. Use them to either render your opponent vulnerable for a brief moment, or block an attack and instantly perform a move straight after while the opponent is countered. These counters are known as Plasma Revenge and Plasma Reverse. Plasma Strikes, on the other hand, are kind of like a finishing move that can be performed at any time, but only once per round. They do loads of damage, but timing is essential to pulling them off as they are easily spotted by experienced opponents and leave you wide open to attack.



Each of the characters has unique special moves. Gore turns Saturn to stone (top left) and then gasses him with a purple fart (lower centre). Does June remind you of Chun Li? (lower right)

■ GRAPHICS:	★★★★★	It looks great and everything moves around quickly and cleanly
■ SOUND:	★★★	Unremarkable music, but the sound effects are pretty cool
■ GAMEPLAY:	★★★★★	Enjoyable and easy to get into, but perhaps too easy for some
■ LIFESPAN:	★★★	Once you've seen all the cool moves there isn't much left
■ ORIGINALITY:	★★	Another Japanese beat 'em up with all the expected clichés...

■ OVERALL: Its simple fighting may not offer enough for hardened players, but if you're after a fun beat 'em up which isn't overly complicated you'll be hard pressed to find one that's as enjoyable and as well presented as *Star Gladiator*.

7
OUT OF TEN

Pandemonium

Ever feel that platform games have become a bit stale of late? Well, worry no more, an acrobat and jester team have arrived to cause utter Pandemonium!

PUBLISHER:	Crystal Dynamics
DEVELOPER:	Crystal Dynamics
DISTRIBUTOR:	BMG
RELEASE:	December
PRICE:	\$89.95
GAME TYPE:	Platform
DIFFICULTY:	Moderate
PLAYERS:	One
LINK UP:	No
CONTROL:	Joypad
MEMORY CARD:	Passwords
CALSSIFICATION:	G



It's the dramatic camera angles which always offer a new perspective that sets Pandemonium apart from all other platform games with 3D graphics.

Alternatives

There's plenty of platform games around, but few look as good as Pandemonium. Try Crash Bandicoot or Cheesy for similar thrills.



Mmm... Pre-rendered intro sequences don't come much slicker than Pandemonium's!

Pandemonium is one of the first in the new wave of platform games headed to the PlayStation. We're all familiar with the typical side-scrolling platform game, having seen countless swarms of them evolve from the simple sixteen colour 8-bit games of yesteryear to the parallax scrolling affairs on the Super NES and Megadrive, and now the extravagant 3D wonders such as *Crash* and *Pandemonium*.

Describing what *Pandemonium* actually looks like in action is very difficult and it's far easier to appreciate by actually seeing the game in motion. Although it is a fairly standard left-to-right scrolling game, with little

opportunity to stray off the beaten path, it's the way the roving viewpoint continuously offers a new perspective that gives *Pandemonium* a sense of freedom. The camera angle swings and pans around to give you the best view of the action and as you progress through levels the graphics rotate and scale in every possible way, so whether you move up, down, left or right, the action is always the central focus.

On one particular level you are required to run along a platform that winds upwards around a tower and as you reach the summit the view looks up at you from behind, giving a unique look to the game. It looks absolutely fantastic

and adds more atmosphere to a game of this style than seen before. It's obvious that the developers have spent a lot of time getting it just right, for the perspective never seems to hinder the action and moves along very smoothly, regardless of where you are.

At the start of each level you can choose to be either Fargas the jester or Nikki, his acrobatic assistant. The levels are set out in a way that allows them to be finished by either character, however there are a number of differences between the duo that will influence the way you go about getting through them, and in some of the later levels careful consideration of who you pick must be



All the usual platform game clichés apply - run right and jump on the baddie's head - but the presentation puts Pandemonium in a class of its own.



The beauty of this game is that you never know what lies around the corner. From bouncy spider webs and water melons to animated mushrooms, there's always something cool to see and do.

taken if you wish to uncover everything on offer. The main difference between the two is that Nikki can do a double jump which makes getting to higher platforms a little easier, while Fargas has a spinning attack that can be used against enemies while he is powerless.

At the beginning the player is given two heart points representing your energy level and an occasional gold-rimmed heart can be found to add an additional heart point, giving you an extra chance. Red hearts can be collected to replenish those lost when hit by creatures or flying objects, or by impaling yourself on something pointy. Likewise, any magic spells are lost as soon as you take any damage.

Enemies can be defeated either by jumping on top of them in the time honoured tradition, or can be shot with fireballs, frozen, or shrunk to a more manageable size and then squashed after collecting the appropriate magic spell power-up.

There are many obstacles to avoid that slow you down such as barriers, but, on the other hand, there are also spinning buffers that give you a boost of speed, a la *Sonic*.

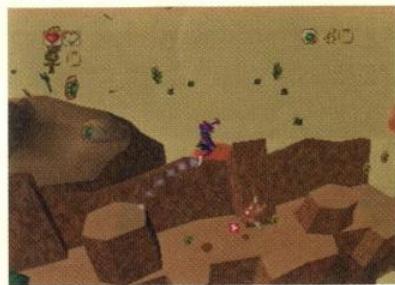
Should you find more than 80% of the jewels and treasure by the end of the level, you'll be taken to a bonus stage. Running along a winding path, the idea is to collect as many jewels as possible while trying to outrun a force field which, if catches up with you, sends you back to the start of the bonus level for another try - you can't complain about that!

Even though the new perspective is unrivaled in terms of style and originality, the levels are still designed to be followed along a set path. Occasionally the trail does branch out when keys are picked up or by pushing on different objects, thereby revealing secret rooms and passages or opening hidden paths. There are a lot of secrets and you won't find everything on your first go.

Pandemonium looks fantastic, yet it bears much resemblance to many other platform games before it. It's full of all the usual pitfalls and obstacles such as moving, rotating, rising and falling platforms, and the ubiquitous power-ups can be found throughout the levels. Yes, there's a never ending stream of similar platform games available, but only occasionally do we see ones displaying the charm and quality of *Pandemonium*. Its slick design and delicious playability does cover up what is essentially just another platform game, but the execution is immaculate and full of charm. While it might not break any new ground in terms of gameplay, it does offer a new way of looking at it. Gamers rejoice, a new era of platform action is upon us and it starts with a little *Pandemonium*.

Clowning around

The story follows two misfits, Fargas and Nikki, who meet at a magician's training seminar. Both have aspirations above their current situation. For Fargas the jester and his demented talking staff, Sid (Bix Barton and Michael Cane? - ed.), it means no longer being used for target practice by the disrespectful townsfolk. For young Nikki, it's a chance to break away from the dull(!) life performing on the high wire with her family, The Flying Fleugels. During the seminar they stumble across a powerful wizard's spell book. Nikki seizes upon the opportunity and before they have a chance to read the warnings on the cover - May result in danger and death - the two are out on the balcony ready to unleash forces beyond their control. Needless to say, pandemonium ensues!



The camera tilts downwards so you can see what you're landing on (left). Rollin', rollin', rollin'... (right)

■ GRAPHICS:	★★★★★	Superb scrolling and beautifully rendered worlds
■ SOUND:	★★★★★	Happy music sets the atmosphere of the adventure
■ GAMEPLAY:	★★★	Underneath the glossy coating lies a decent platform game
■ LIFESPAN:	★★★	Even the most uninterested people will want to play!
■ ORIGINALITY:	★★★	There's little new apart from the graphics, but has it a special charm

■ OVERALL: Beautiful graphics and stunning presentation make *Pandemonium* one of the best platform games around.

8

OUT OF TEN

Soviet Strike

After sorting out those pesky Middle Eastern madmen and their drug dealing cronies, it's time for EA's Strike team to clean up the Commies for good!

PUBLISHER:	Electronic Arts
DISTRIBUTOR:	EA
RELEASE:	Out now
PRICE:	\$99.95
GAME TYPE:	Shooting
DIFFICULTY:	Tough
NO. OF PLAYERS:	One
LINK UP:	No
CONTROL:	Joypad
MEMORY CARD:	Password
CLASSIFICATION:	G8+



Baby milk factory my butt, they're chemical weapon laboratories! Spare no mercy in eradicating those desert dwelling scum from the face of the Earth!



The intro sequence and cut scenes are composed of slickly edited video footage and computer images relating directly to the missions you are involved in.

Alternatives

The Strike series of games remain a style unto themselves, however if it's helicopter hijinks you're after you might also like to check out *Black Dawn*, *Gunship 2000* or *Thunderhawk 2*.

You are part of the Strike Team, a covert operation that works outside normal channels, its responsibility is to anticipate potential wars and stop them before they begin. Once again, a madman has threatened Western democracy with horrid possibility of nuclear war and, after successful missions in *Desert*, *Jungle* and *Urban Strikes*, you have once again been called upon to serve your nation and restore world peace. The latest threat this time is lurking in the former Soviet Union.

The game is viewed from outside the chopper in an effective isometric environment, allowing you to see a fair portion of the surrounding terrain. The photo-realistic landscape is very well detailed and resembles the unique geographic features of each of the particular localities.

Each of the five campaigns consists of several missions that must be completed in sequence. While there is nothing to stop you flying wherever you like, the suggested order is naturally the best. For example, in the first mission of the Crimean Campaign you must destroy the enemy radars, but if this is not carried out post haste, the enemy will know of your presence and thus will take the necessary action of sending in reinforcements. This will subsequently affect the difficulty throughout the remainder of the campaign and some missions cannot be accomplished until earlier ones have been successfully completed.

You begin each campaign with only three Apaches, each loaded with a full

compliment of weapons, fuel and armour. Before starting you must outfit your whirly bird with one of the various weapon configurations available. Depending on which selection you chose, you have at your disposal the chain gun, Hellfire missiles and Hydra rockets, as well as an extra wingtip weapon or fuel pod. As you progress through the missions, many of your supplies will run low and may need to be replaced quite often.

Strategically placed ammo and fuel drops can be found throughout the missions and winched aboard your chopper simply by hovering above them, however, the extra wingtip weapons are very rarely replenished and should only be used when really necessary. Other essentials that you will find are armour repair kits and extra lives, which at times are the most difficult items to locate. From time to time you will be required to rescue prisoners of war or hostages, and the incentive to successfully ferry them to a nearby landing zone is the reward of 150 armour repair points.

Whether hidden in enemy complexes or as friendly drops, there are only a limited amount of supplies



available for your entire campaign. With this in mind, you'll soon realise that each mission must be executed quickly and efficiently - there isn't a lot of time to go sight-seeing. The fact that there is no save feature between each of the missions within a campaign only reinforces this point, and success is dependant upon careful planning and impeccable combat skills. Pilots who try to be Rambo will be quickly shot down in flames.

One of the more useful piece of equipment aboard your Apache is the impressively titled Super Multi-Functional Display. It is here that at a glance you can check on mission objectives, map positioning of friendly and enemy installations and the availability of supply crates, and as an option you can have the compass and levels of fuel, ammo and armour visible at all times. Although you and your copilot are the only people from Strike force out in the thick of the action, you are not alone. Through the SMFD you will receive constant transmissions from HQ in the form of radio and visual mediums that will inform you of any updates or changes to the mission briefing.

As you progress through the five campaigns, the missions become increasingly demanding, with more difficult objectives and heavier defence from the enemy. The opposition has in their forces anything from tanks and helicopters to warships and mobile missile launchers, each taking a different amount of firepower to destroy. On a lighter note, there are many sub-missions that you can take on, in addition to those outlined by



The photo-realistic landscape can make it difficult to spot enemy troops and equipment as their camouflage really does work. But they can't hide forever!



There's never a dull moment in this game, if you're not blowing up submarines or enemy buildings you're having to rescue your troublesome co-pilot.

HQ. These can be very rewarding, for example in the first mission, Santa Claus is trying to land his reindeer, help him and he may just have a present for you!

The Apache's controls and realistic inertia may take a bit of practice to adapt to and, while you don't have to adjust your altitude to traverse over geographic features such as mountains, you will need to master the chopper's basic controls if you are to have any chance of surviving against enemy fire. Of course, once you have the controls down pat you'll be dodging and strafing the enemy as easily as a seasoned *Doom* player.

The fact that *Soviet Strike* is a tough and at times gruelling game may be the largest factor to turn people off. It is not the sort of game you can quickly pick up and play for instant satisfaction, most

missions require a number of attempts before you work out the best way in which to deal with them and therefore it demands you put a fair bit of effort into it before you start to make any real progress.

Soviet Strike does indeed appear quite similar to the original and in fact most of the changes are purely cosmetic, with the moveable viewpoint being the only real improvement. However, as the old saying goes, "if it ain't broke, don't fix it", and *Soviet Strike* is just as an exciting blast as the first game was a few years ago. The only addition we would like to have seen is a two-player competitive or co-operative link up game, although the *Strike* games have always been designed as one player games and, as such, they work extremely well. And *Soviet Strike* is by far the best *Strike* game of the lot.

View to a kill

Soviet Strike's most notable improvement over the past games in the *Strike* series is the ability given to the player to control the viewpoint at the press of a button. The standard fixed viewpoint can be unlocked with the select button, whereupon the camera angle swings around to follow behind the chopper in a chase-cam view. No matter which way you point your chopper in, the camera stays behind it to give you a line of sight directly ahead of you. By pressing the select button again the viewpoint will hold its position where you want it, making it easier to see the defences and potential ambushes surrounding specific targets. The ability to rotate the landscape to any angle is possible because the terrain and all the buildings on it are 3D objects which the PlayStation can manipulate with ease, whereas in the previous games everything was drawn as a flat, two dimensional picture. Will the marvels of technology never cease?

■ GRAPHICS:	★★★★	Detailed landscape, but some of the sprites look out of place
■ SOUND:	★★★	Adequate chopper sounds and gunfire
■ GAMEPLAY:	★★★★	An enjoyable challenge which requires you to think ahead
■ LIFESPAN:	★★★★	Only five levels, but it's tough to beat. Satisfying replay value.
■ ORIGINALITY:	★★★	Little has changed since the original, but the rotating view is a plus

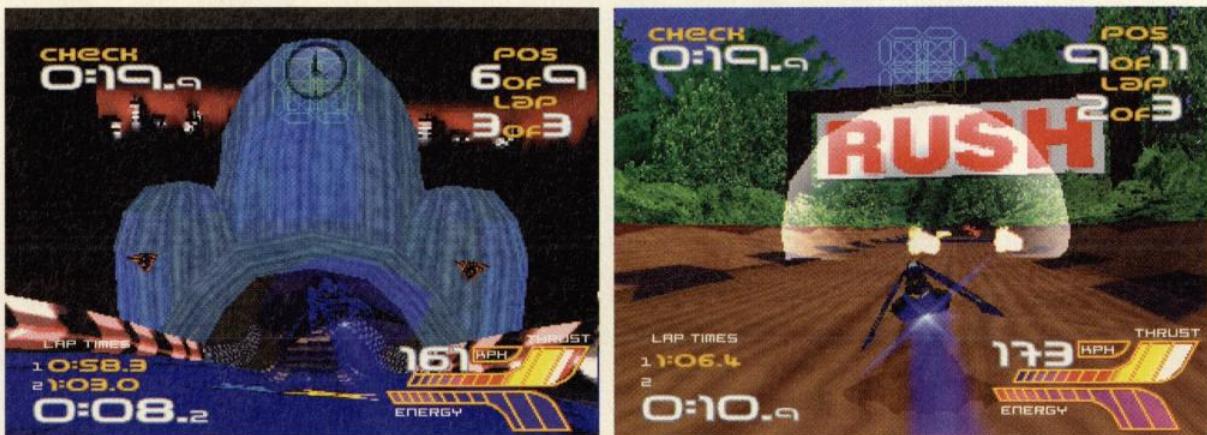
■ OVERALL: *Soviet Strike* is a thoroughly engrossing shooting game - but be prepared for a tough time! Fans of the original *Strike* games will not be disappointed.

OUT OF TEN
8

Wipeout 2097

Aaaaaaaaahg... I can't stop! It's just too intense! Wipeout 2097 is one of the most compelling and addictive racing games ever seen and its attraction goes further than the trippy visuals.

PUBLISHER:	Psygnosis
DEVELOPER:	Psygnosis
DISTRIBUTOR:	Psygnosis
RELEASE:	Out now
PRICE:	\$99.95
GAME TYPE:	Fast racing
DIFFICULTY:	Hard
PLAYERS:	One
LINK UP:	Yes
MEMORY CARD:	Password
CONTROLLER:	Analogue
CLASSIFICATION:	G



Wipeout 2097 provides an adrenaline rush unlike any other game to date. The speed, the graphics and the sound all add up to one heck of a ride!



The setup screens ooze style.



Wipeout 2097 has the best intro sequence ever - it's one of few we actually watch!

Formula 1 is a brilliant driving game, indeed the best yet seen on the PlayStation, but it's not going to thrill you to bits if you don't like this form of motor sport in the first place. Let's face it, Murray Walker is a boring old git and if you're after a racing game with a bit of, dare we say thrills and excitement, *Wipeout 2097* is about as far away from mundane driving as you can get.

Set a century into the future, the sequel to *Wipeout* is based around the F5000 Anti-Gravity Racing League in which sleek high speed craft compete fiercely with each other for first place. Anything less and you're just another loser. This level of competition adds an extra dimension to the racing, for not only do you have to concentrate on the track ahead, you've also got up to 14 other racers vying against you who'll try whatever it takes to put you out of the race.

There are heaps of cool weapons and

ship enhancements to play with, from the standard projectile variety (homing and multi-shot missiles) to items which assist your efforts (shields and auto-pilots). These power-ups are gained by taking a line over the many coloured chevrons marked on the track, but knowing when and where to use each particular one is the key to success. An example is the auto-pilot which takes over control of your craft and pulls you through even the nastiest of corners at top speed, but has a nasty habit of dropping you back in the hot seat right before a turn, therefore working out when to initiate and disengage it can be a great advantage.

Where *Wipeout 2097* excels is in the way the craft handle. It just feels really together and even when you're floundering in last place you know it's due to your own ineptitude in driving rather than lack of thorough control. Once you understand how the basic dynamics work you'll find yourself going faster for longer

without hitting things, although anyone with less than perfect mastery over their chosen craft will still find themselves brushing dangerously close to the barriers. This is where you're given more leeway than in the original game and you can grind along the side of tunnels sending out a shower of sparks for a while before actually smash your ship into the wall.

The graphics are blatantly stunning, to put it mildly. Each of the eight circuits has its own style and they really do come across as being quite different. It's not just a case of a new paint job and the same corners in a different sequence for each track. The course layouts are fiendish in design and range from the long sweeping straits of the easier tracks to the tight, twisting ones of the Phantom class that'll have you lurching from side to side in your seat as you snap back and forth through the sharp turns, with sick bags at the ready.

When you're playing the game

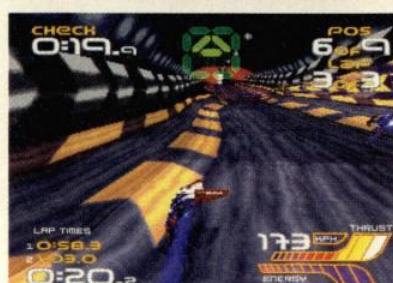


These static screen shots can't convey the speed and excitement of *Wipeout 2097*. It's one of those games that you have to see running to fully appreciate



you'll probably be far too intensely focused on the race to notice, but for the casual observer a stunning wealth of depth and detail is apparent. Translucent blasts of gas issue forth from split ducts, solid, three dimensional streaks of rain spit against your window and subtle texture mapping all add up to provide one of the richest environments you'll ever find yourself playing a game in.

The most overlooked factor of most



One of the nice touches is the transparent blue exhaust plumes that stream out behind the ships



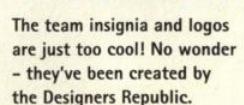
An in-cockpit view is available and when in this mode the screen rocks and tilts with the ship's motion.

■ GRAPHICS:	★★★★★	Fast fast fast! If only real life looked as good as this...
■ SOUND:	★★★★★	At last, a game with a decent soundtrack!
■ GAMEPLAY:	★★★★★	Tough and uncompromising, and very challenging
■ LIFESPAN:	★★★★★	Oh yeah, it just keeps getting better and better!
■ ORIGINALITY:	★★★	Wipeout is in a class of its own, nothing comes close

games, the sound effects and accompanying soundtrack, are brought to the forefront in *Wipeout 2097* with a professionally produced selection of kickin' techno tunes. Those in touch with popular music will probably recognise the more commercial tracks like the *Firestarter* instrumental by The Prodigy, but the rest are, in our humble opinion, more fitting of the atmosphere enveloping the game. This is further enhanced by the excellent vehicle noises and rushing of the wind past the cockpit which sounds excellent on a decent stereo. Make the effort to hook it up and prepare to be blasted away!

As a sequel, *Wipeout 2097* manages to be more than just more of the same. Sure, it does have a lot of visual similarities with its predecessor, but the game engine has been overhauled dramatically and the overall result is nothing short of stunning. It's the way it continues to grow on you that makes it such an enjoyable and satisfying game to play, yet it provides just as much of an adrenalin rush for beginners as it does for those who've played it to death and mastered every single bend and undulation in each track.

If you like your games to be fast and frantic then you must play *Wipeout 2097*. There is simply no other possibility.



The team insignia and logos are just too cool! No wonder - they've been created by the Designers Republic.

It just gets better and better!

What really makes a truly great game is how it stands up after longterm playing. There's no point in having a spectacular game that you're going to either tire of after a few days or that you'll finish before the week's end. *Wipeout 2097* has every aspect of longterm play thoroughly covered.

Completing the first six tracks will prove quite difficult for first time players, but this challenge is progressive, easing you into it with two tracks at slow speed (Vector), then two at medium (Venom), and then two at fast (Rapier). Once you've come first in each, you get to play Challenge 1, where you have to play through the six tracks at Rapier level. You must come first in each to qualify for the next track, and if you don't finish in the top three positions you lose one of the three continues that you are granted. By the time you reach this stage you'll be a much better player, yet you'll still be finding the whole experience just as challenging. Upon completing the first challenge, two new tracks are provided which are for the new Phantom racing class. The speed at this level is ridiculously fast and the diabolical design of these two tracks make everything prior to them seem easy. For who that manage to finish first in these two tracks, Challenge 2 awaits. This is for those hard core freaks who can attempt to beat all eight tracks in succession with only three continues. Of course there's incentive to try beat Challenge 2, since the secret Piranha racing team awaits with a special prototype craft to race in. The learning curve is perfect, and the interest is always there. This is how games should be.

9
OUT OF TEN

Tobal No. 1

Many of the 3D fighting games currently popular have great graphics but the gameplay is still in the 2D era. Enter Tobal No. 1, the latest beat 'em up from Japan to promise 'a new dimension' in fighting!

PUBLISHER:	Squaresoft
DEVELOPER:	Squaresoft
DISTRIBUTOR:	Sony
RELEASE:	December '96
PRICE:	\$99.95
GAME TYPE:	3D Fighting
DIFFICULTY:	Tough
PLAYERS:	One or two
LINK UP:	No
MEMORY CARD:	Handy
CONTROLLER:	Joypad
CLASSIFICATION:	M15+



The gigantic boss character Nork literally takes up half the screen! (left) The robot Mufu, see here doing a handstand, is an unpredictable opponent. (right)

Perhaps the most interesting thing about *Tobal No. 1* is the fact that the company behind this latest 3D fighter is none other than Squaresoft, noted for its exceptional work in the past on Nintendo RPG's including *The Secret of Mana* and the *Final Fantasy* series.

In creating *Tobal*, a bunch of staff who have had a hand in creating the *Virtua Fighter* and *Tekken* games have been 'recruited' from Sega and Namco. Furthermore, manga artist Akira Toriyama (creator of the popular Japanese comic *Dragonball*) designed all the characters. So *Tobal No. 1* should kick butt, right? Well, it really depends on your personal taste. Those who favour texture-mapped graphics in their games will be shocked, as the characters and backgrounds are made up of shaded polygons and appear quite chunky. But that's because the game is running in high resolution mode - the crispness and colour vibrancy of the game is exquisite, the trade off being the lack of textures on flat surfaces.

In terms of game modes, there's the standard one-player Tournament, the two-player Vs Battle, a Practice Mode (that unfortunately doesn't have a patch on *Tekken 2*'s) and a Quest Mode. Initially

there are eight characters available that include the babe Epon, thunder-thighed Mary and, of course, the cocky hero-type Chuji, as well as a variety of non human characters like the comical robot Hom and Ili the beast.

The fighting system is unique in that you can move anywhere you want in the ring, whereas in games like *Tekken 2* and *Toshinden* the battles are fought on a single axis going forwards or backwards, with only rolls and dives to the side giving the impression that you're in a 2D environment.

While throwing moves are standard in any fighting game, in *Tobal* you can grab an opponent and follow it up with a headbutt, a knee in the midriff or a throw! Even if the opponent initiates a grapple you can break their hold, some characters can turn it to their advantage and attack the grabber - that'll show 'em!

The controls do take a bit of getting used to, one button is used for each high, mid or low attack and whether it's using your arms or legs is determined by the computer. Jumping and blocking are done by using the shoulder buttons, as up and down on the pad now moves your character from side to side on the fighting

arena. It's this true 3D movement, coupled with the grappling that heralds an advance in playability as far as fighting games are concerned. For instance, after a bit of practice you can sidestep a foe's attack and execute a foot sweep that'll send them to the ground, or give 'em a kick in the side! It enhances the gameplay dramatically over its competitors, and is essential to master for later on when you fight the humongous boss Nork, who's main tactic, by way of sheer bulk, is to push you out of the ring!

In the wake of *Tekken 2*, it's inevitable that all fighting games will be compared to it. Overall, *Tobal* comes a close second to *T2* in terms of speed, and while the fighting moves aren't as flashy, they are nevertheless very well done. There's a world of difference in comparing their gameplay; while the fun in *Tekken* involves stringing as many moves together as possible to brutally knock your opponent senseless, the challenge in *Tobal* is in utilising your unrestricted movement to evade your opponent's moves... and counter-attacking! It's a much more realistic approach to fighting, as you also have to consider when to (manually) block and



While the intro is a slick pre-rendered affair, the victory screen (bottom) uses the same graphics as in the game



The jumps are performed with a shoulder button and are realistic short hops (left). Grappling with your opponent can result in counter attacks (right).



The quest mode is an additional bonus which allows you to use the boss characters. Much more challenging than using cheat codes to access them.



More quest mode action

defend. Ideally, the avid fighting game fan should own a copy of both!

The characters fight incredibly smoothly and the question of graphics are really a matter of taste; while *T2* undeniably has more complex visuals as far as textures are concerned, to some the simple and crisp look of *Tobal's* high-resolution graphics is nevertheless stunning in its own right and the light-sourcing gives the characters a true to life three dimensional appearance. One

can easily think that they need glasses when switching back to *Tekken 2*!

The quest mode is a bonus; despite the graphically simple environment, there's enough surprises in store that raise a gasp or two and the difficulty level (and addiction) increases as you progress from one 'episode' to another; it's a fair workout!

The icing on the cake has to be the loading times - or rather the lack of them. As soon as one bout ends the next is immediately ready to go, with barely a pause in the proceedings to mop you fevered brow!

While not as immediately satisfying to play as *Tekken 2*, once you're accustomed to *Tobal's* unique (dare one say revolutionary?) fighting style, you'll find that it offers a deeper and more rewarding challenge which grows the longer you play it and begin to discover its subtleties.

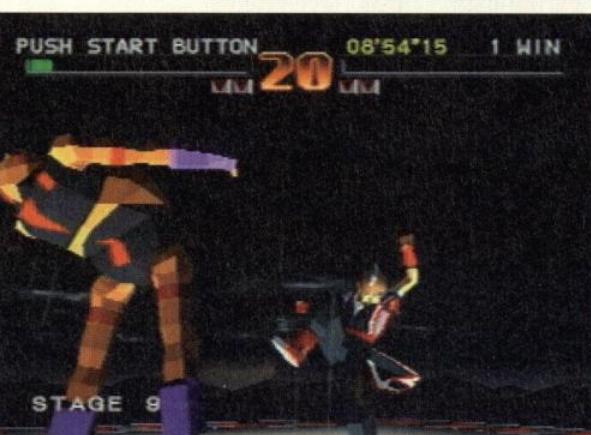


Quest Mode Ahoy!

With Squaresoft's expertise in RPG's, it's quite fitting that they'd incorporate a Quest Mode. An extra game in itself, your character of choice is viewed in a third-person chase view from behind and slightly above. Placed in a labyrinth, your objective is to find items which enable you to play as the bosses in the Tournament and Vs. modes. Along the way you must avoid various obstacles like trap doors in the ground, pressure pads that fire darts from walls, boulders and tumbling logs! Elevators take you deeper and deeper underground where a plethora of foes await for you to fight; in these segments the viewpoint reverts to that of the fighting game. Potions, and food can be picked up and eaten for healing; poison and 'life down' potions can be thrown at opponents to sap their strength, and crystals act as currency to 'purchase' a random item should you step on pads around the place. There's also plenty of rooms with a stash of the aforementioned goodies for you to use! Only after you complete the practice stage where you learn various moves can you enter the three 'proper' episodes, which each grant you a boss upon successful completion. After those are completed you can enter the ever changing Dungeon (yes, the layout is different every time!) which lets you play the Toriyama Robo once completed!



The characters in *Tobal No. 1* show a surprising degree of creativity on the developer's behalf. No Ken & Ryu clones here!



Alternatives

Tobal No. 1 may appear similar to *Tekken 2* (9/10, issue #1) and all the other recent 3D beat 'em ups such as *Star Gladiator*, *Soul Blade* and *Toshinden* 2, but it is the only one so far that has come close to approaching realistic 3D fighting.

■ GRAPHICS:	★★★★★	Looks sparse at first, but you'll soon appreciate the detail
■ SOUND:	★★★★	Excellent music but the effects could have been beefier
■ GAMEPLAY:	★★★★★	Tekken may be more brutal, but this is more thoughtful
■ LIFESPAN:	★★★★★	Oozes depth of gameplay, this will steadily grow on you!
■ ORIGINALITY:	★★★★	Perhaps the most strategic and realistic fighting game so far

■ OVERALL: If *Tekken 2* were a movie, it would be *Terminator 2*, while *Tobal No. 1* would be *Blade Runner*. Is there such thing as a thinking person's fighting game? There is now!

9
OUT OF TEN



ETERNAL DAMNATION
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TO PLAN YOUR
REVENGE

"My Playstation is bleeding..." *Game Fan*

BLOOD OMEN
LEGACY
OF
KAIN
COMING SOON



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MA15+

Command & Conquer

When *Command & Conquer* was released on the PC eighteen or so months ago it kicked off a real-time strategy craze that has shown no sign of abating.

PUBLISHER:	Virgin Interactive
DEVELOPER:	Westwood Studios
DISTRIBUTOR:	Virgin Interactive
RELEASE:	December
PRICE:	\$99.95
GAME TYPE:	Real-Time Strategy
DIFFICULTY:	Hard
NO. OF PLAYERS:	One
LINK UP:	No
CONTROLLER:	Joypad only!
MEM CARD:	Not Required
CLASSIFICATION:	M15+



Despite the small and fiddly looking graphics, *Command & Conquer* offers one of the most thoughtful and satisfying challenges ever seen in a game.

It's taken a while, but *Command & Conquer* has finally made to the PlayStation. Has it survived the transition? Is it possible to play a mouse based game with a joypad? Where do babies come from? Will your PC owning friends take you more seriously if you buy this game? Read on.

It must be stated now that if you've played the PC version of *C&C* there's no point buying the new PlayStation version, as it is almost identical and boasts the inclusion of the *Covert Operations* missions (an expansion disk for the original *C&C*) along with all the original ones.

For those of you blissfully unaware of what all the fuss is about here's a quick synopsis. The world is in the grip of a power struggle between the U.N. sponsored GDI and the evil, unshaven brotherhood of NOD. The fight is on for control of the world's Tiberium supply, a potent source of energy, wealth and herbal extracts for breast firming lotions, and the currency with which you will construct your outposts and build or buy your units.

The heart of *C&C* is its real-time combat engine. There are no turns in *C&C*, everything happens immediately and your reactions to situations have to be quick and decisive. There is a gradual evolution in the technological developments as you progress through the game, either as GDI or NOD, with more and more units and buildings becoming available as you progress through the levels. The two opposing sides have their own unique units with different strengths and weaknesses, and so require differing strategies to play.



Full motion video cut sequences make up an important part of the game, they provide you with mission briefings and words of support from your commander.

The missions you have to undertake vary quite considerably. Some simply require you to build up a base and destroy your enemy, while in others you'll be sneaking a lone commando around, or escorting a convoy from one point to another. It's this level of depth that is the real strength of *C&C*, with no one way or one strategy to use to achieve victory. I once destroyed a large enemy base with two bazooka troops, one rifleman and one engineer thinking it was the base I was supposed to move into at the start of the game. It was only after I'd taken the base, built an army and gone off searching for the enemy that I realised I'd already won!

So now it's big question time: Can you play it with a joypad? The answer is yes, BUT... Apparently the PlayStation was, for technical reasons, unable to deal with both *C&C* and the mouse at the same time, so the only option is to use the regular joypad. It's nowhere near as easy or intuitive as with the mouse and when the going gets rough and you need to do things in a hurry that joypad can become mighty frustrating. Selecting separate groups of troops can never be done as quickly as you want to.

A few modifications have been made to the game to make allowances for this compromise, but they are hardly enough and one original game feature which would have made mouseless playing a lot easier has been left out - PlayStation *C&C* doesn't let you group units so that they can all be reactivated with one button press. There are three unused shoulder buttons on the joypad that could have performed this function nicely, but they haven't been used for

anything, the stupidity of this is almost beyond belief. Such a feature would have made playing without a mouse quite bearable and to leave it out is nothing short of a tragedy!

The other somewhat serious oversight is the speed at which the game runs at. Now usually it's a case of the game chugging along far too slowly at the pace of a wounded snail, but with this version of *C&C* the speed appears to be stuck at full throttle. Fine while you're waiting for buildings to be constructed or for well 'ard *C&C* veterans, but first-timers will be overwhelmed by the ripping pace.

And finally, while its biggest strength on the PC was the competitive multi-player games available through networking, the PlayStation version sadly misses out, despite the link-up opportunity.

Oh well, *Command & Conquer* is still a seriously good game and a welcome change of pace from the usual PlayStation fodder. But whether you want to play it alone and train your fingers up to the level of a twelfth Dan black belt fondle specialist just to be able to keep up with the game is up to you.



The sandbags are breached! Call for backup!

■ GRAPHICS:	★★	Lacklustre and drab, but you won't notice with all the action
■ SOUND:	★★★	Great effects tempered by an inappropriate soundtrack
■ GAMEPLAY:	★★★★	A poor interface, but still an enjoyable game
■ LIFESPAN:	★★★★★	Offers plenty of scope for wannabe dictators to hone their skills
■ ORIGINALITY:	★★★★★	A stimulating change from the masses of similar arcade games

■ OVERALL: There's nothing else like *Command & Conquer* on the PlayStation and even if it is hard to play without a mouse, it's still worth making the effort.

8
OUT OF TEN

Coolboarders

Woah dudes, hold on tightly to your beanies, it's time for thrills and spills aplenty as we take to the slopes on the first snowboarding game for the PlayStation!



Going sick on the mountain, just watch out you don't slide off the edge! (left) Load up before take off to get wicked air! (centre) Woah, not cool. (right)

Coolboarders is currently the only snowboarding game to grace the PlayStation and if it's any indication of the other titles to come for alpine sports fans, then the future is looking very good indeed. Where *Coolboarders* differs from Namco's arcade skiing game *Alpine Surfer* is that stunts play an integral part to the scoring of the game. As you hang in the air after a jump, the combination of shoulder buttons and quick pad work will make you grab the board in a variety of ways to show off. Indy grab - no problemo! 360° Stalefish - going off sick! Execute it successfully (and that means landing properly, too) and you'll be awarded a number of points depending on the complexity of your move.

Visually the graphics are on par with most of the better racing games out there. The courses have been rendered in glorious detail with texture mapped surfaces and objects, as well as nice touches like falling snow. As with most arcade-style racing games there are checkpoints throughout the courses that you have to pass within a time limit to continue on. While the easy course is fairly straight forward to navigate, the more difficult ones are

laden with sharp turns, sudden drop-offs, obstacle-laden tunnels and jumps of faith across bottomless chasms. Although they require fixed concentration, the advanced courses can all be finished within the time limit with relative ease, however completing them without tumbling down most of the way is another matter, and you've also got 'trick points' to think about as well!

The snowboarder's animation is worthy of a mention; the various grabs and stunts look like the real thing (to the untrained eye, at least) and his/her (yes, you can choose to be a guy or a gal) snowboarding posture is uncannily lifelike - at times when you lose balance, their arms will flail wildly in an effort to regain stability. It's this attention to detail that really impresses, especially when you get to see the action replay after the completion of the course; the editing and camera angles are so good it's almost like watching something for real!

In terms of sound effects, you really can't do much with snowboarding. Nevertheless, the 'swiiish' of your board sounds convincing and changes accordingly when you slide out or

manoeuvre across different parts of the course. Post-jump landings have a solid 'thump' to them, as do your accidents! Tunnel sections have a great reverberating howling wind effect and perhaps most amusing (or annoying, depending on your mood) is the continuous comments spouted by an enthusiastic Yank voice over. "Woah, I though you were a goner!" And so forth.

While being a lot of fun to play, there is one major annoyance in that you tend to bounce off walls and obstacles a bit too unrealistically. Even if you brush up against them very slowly, at times you feel like a human pinball as you bounce around uncontrollably and start sliding uphill! Still, it's a solid game that should appeal to anybody that's into the sport. And even if you're not a ski freak it's still worthy of a look; the graphics are fantastic and the drive to achieve the best time and the most impressive stunts can be very addictive - especially with a few friends around! But be warned - there's no two player game, a real shame as this would have been an exceptional racing game if it had been blessed with a split-screen mode. Perhaps next time... please?



The replay feature gives you a rundown on all those sick moves you pulled off. There's a fair selection of grabs and spins you can do at 'trick' checkpoints.

PUBLISHER:	Sony
DEVELOPER:	UEP Systems
DISTRIBUTOR:	Sony
RELEASE:	January '97
PRICE:	\$99.95
GAME TYPE:	Snowboarding
DIFFICULTY:	Easy
PLAYERS:	One
LINK UP:	No
MEMORY CARD:	Not needed
CONTROLLER:	Standard
CLASSIFICATION:	G

Alternatives

Coolboarders is the only snow boarding game currently available, but *ShreadFest* from Electronic Arts is on the way.



Not only can you choose to be a boy or a girl rider, you can also choose their threads.

- GRAPHICS: ★★★★ Looks pretty good, though a little rough around the edges
- SOUND: ★★★ Generic music and the commentary could have done with more lines
- GAMEPLAY: ★★★★ It's fun, but if only you didn't bounce around so much...
- LIFESPAN: ★★★ Easy to get into, but perfecting the tricks will keep you coming back!
- ORIGINALITY: ★★★ Follows the same formula as the arcade skiing games

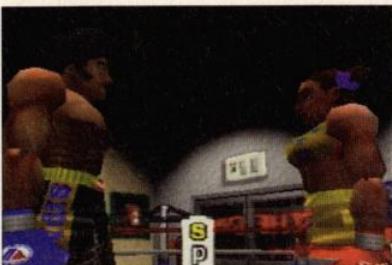
- OVERALL: A competent racing game in its own right, *Coolboarders* is let down only by the lack of a simultaneous two-player game. Quite satisfying for solo snowboarders, though.

7
OUT OF TEN

Victory Boxing '97

Put simply, boxing isn't a sport for wimps, but will it be yourself or the PlayStation that's out for the count after playing Victory Boxing?

PUBLISHER:	JVC
DEVELOPER:	JVC
DISTRIBUTOR:	Warner
RELEASE:	December
PRICE:	\$99.95
GAME TYPE:	Boxing sim
DIFFICULTY:	Very hard
PLAYERS:	1 - 2
LINK-UP:	No
CONTROLLER:	Joypad
MEMORY CARD:	Save ranking
CLASSIFICATION:	M15+



"I've got bigger breasts than you and I'm a bloke!" (right) Time for more cosmetic surgery. (centre) Blond hair and bulging biceps. And she's heavy. (right)

Victory Boxing '97, the first proper boxing title available for the PlayStation, is a welcome addition to the fold of generic beat 'em ups, admirably breaking new ground in its attempt to replicate the gentleman's sport of boxing.

Those expecting a boxing version of *Tekken 2* will be in for quite a shock. Diving in at the deep end of *Victory Boxing* is the worst thing you can do, and will only result in a game that ends as quickly as it began. To get anything out of the game, it is vital that you explore the manual and practice, practice and practice some more to develop and hone your skills before you can hope to understand the techniques available to match your opponents.

There is an Exhibition mode and the Main Event game to choose to fight in. In the Exhibition, you fight a single match against a variety of opponents. You may select the number of rounds per match and their length, as well as being able to disable the TKO rule and other options. The Main Event mode allows you to create your own boxer and then enter him or her into the



world of professional boxing and save them, along with their fight record, to a memory card for future bouts, allowing you to battle your way up through the ranks to become the champion of the world.

As with real life boxing, if you are to become a serious contender for the Championship belt you'll need to obtain the services of a promoter. In this game your promoter, Ed, has a strange resemblance to Don King, complete with wild hair and same last name! Ed organises your upcoming bouts and offers advice on your training and physical development. To improve your stamina, strength and speed, you can train before each fight using the skipping rope, sand bag and speed ball. You have, prior to each match, the opportunity to develop certain areas that your fighter may be lacking in, although focusing on one attribute will deplete your ability in another.

Once the bell rings, it's time to show the world what you're made of. There are three bars at the bottom of the screen representing your power, defence, and

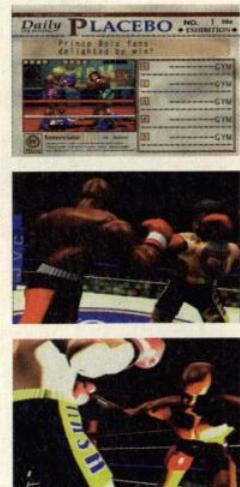


offence levels. It is important that when you swing a punch it connects, as missing the opponent saps your strength and gives them a opportunity to land a hit on you. This level of strategy is the most important factor of the game, but can also be the most frustrating when you strike out with your punches to no avail and your foe dances around you, pummelling you with a flurry of connecting hits.

As is the case in real life, the boxing style and tactics vary between the different opponents. Before each match you are given the chance to analyse your upcoming opponent's fight history, but once the bout has begun you've got to quickly figure out what kind of a boxer you're up against, such as whether they rely on fancy footwork or straight out slugging power to win fights. At the conclusion of each round a stat screen is displayed showing the two fighters with a percentage of punches thrown and landed being displayed on the screen and this can be quite embarrassing for beginners!

Victory Boxing is impressive in its ambitious attempt to replicate the art of boxing, and not just duplicate the abundant fighting games already available. It requires a strenuous amount of training, both on the part of your computerised pugilist and your joypad skills, before you start to make any real progress. Unfortunately, this is where it becomes a bit too specialised for the average player who is used to the immediate results of *Street Fighter* or *Tekken 2*. After 10 bouts struggling to beat your second opponent can become too frustrating for some and even demeaning, to a degree, as the computer opponents seem to relish in flogging your butt again and again. At least in two player mode you are just as useless as each other!

Boxing games offer a lot of potential, but *Victory Boxing* gets bogged down trying to be too realistic and misses the mark on the most important factor of any game - fun!



Win or lose, the results are displayed as front page news for the world to see.



"Here, let me give you a quick nose job. You wanted it flat, didn't you?"

- GRAPHICS: ★★★
- SOUND: ★★
- GAMEPLAY: ★★
- LIFESPAN: ★★★
- ORIGINALITY: ★★★

- The fighters appear chunky, but actually look quite nice
- Average grunts and thumping noises
- Simply too slow and frustrating for most players
- There's a lot to it if you're VERY persistent...
- The only real boxing game on the PlayStation so far

- OVERALL: A comprehensive boxing sim, however the only thing that will be out for the count is your sanity as you ponder why you spent your hard earned dough on this game. Ouch!

5
OUT OF TEN

DISRUPTOR™



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Broken Sword

An American tourist in Paris?! George Stobart's his name and annoying foreigners is his game, but can he solve the conspiracy and get the cute French girl before tea time?

PUBLISHER:	Virgin
DEVELOPER:	Revolution
DISTRIBUTOR:	Sony
RELEASE:	Out now
PRICE:	\$89.95
GAME TYPE:	Adventure
DIFFICULTY:	Medium
PLAYERS:	One
LINK UP:	No
MEMORY CARD:	Yes
CONTROLLER:	Mouse
CALSSIFICATION:	M15+



Your first challenge is to get the distressed waitress from the cafe drunk. (left) Judging from those blast marks, I'd say today's curry is a scorcher. (right)



A cinematic introductory sequence sets the scene for George's adventure to come.

George Stobart, American. While that may make the heart of this game's lead character swell with pride back in his home of the U.S. of A, it doesn't win him much respect from the locals in his holiday destination of Paris. The sole witness to a horrible act of terrorism, George finds himself the number one suspect in the bombing of the cafe he was just sitting outside of. And so begins *Broken Sword*, with you sending him out hot on the heels of the mysterious clown bomber. Luckily there is help at hand in the form of the not unattractive Nico, a beautiful French photo-journalist who shows up shortly after the incident and soon becomes your partner in solving the crime.

Your role as George is to discover and piece together the many clues that link various people, items and locations together. The key to getting anywhere is to talk to everyone you can. An icon-driven menu comes up and, depending on what topics you have knowledge of, you can ask questions about any particular item you have or people you have met. It doesn't require too much thought, though, as the puzzles are fairly linear and even if you don't have any idea where to go or what to do, it can eventually be deduced by asking everyone about everything. More often than not, however, your subjects of interrogation will let slip

clues that lead your questioning along the correct lines necessary to uncover whatever it is you're after. In practise, this results in protracted conversations between George and the other party that seem to go round in circles until you've asked the same question half a dozen times and they either tell you to go away or give in and gush forth with their innermost secrets.

The graphics are superb, with the picturesque backdrops all being originally hand drawn and scanned into the game. Whether you find yourself in Paris or the Middle East, the atmosphere and attention to detail is excellent, although the screen resolution isn't quite a sharp as the PC version and sometimes it's hard to spot small objects and make out the text messages. Animation of the characters is nicely done, with lots of cartoon-style movement filling them with life and personality, but again, their impact is reduced by the small size they often appear as in many of the more panoramic settings. Somewhat unsettling, however, is the painfully slow speed that the cursor moves at. This can be alleviated slightly with the shoulder buttons, but the only way to play the game as it was intended is with the mouse - available separately, of course.

Point and click adventure games

have been around for years and offer the potential to be huge, mind-numbing and brain-straining affairs. Unfortunately, *Broken Sword* isn't one of these. You can't really do anything wrong during the game, except maybe ask someone something they know nothing about, but then it doesn't really matter anyway because you just move to the next item or person on your list until they elicit the response you're after. This can make playing the game a bit frustrating, especially when you know the answer you want, but you still have to wade through heaps of text before the game will give it to you and allow you to progress.

There's really very little interaction required for this game, it's mostly a matter of guiding George in the right direction while you sit back and enjoy the story as it unfolds. What saves *Broken Sword* is its plot. The mystery surrounding the Knights Templar is quite entertaining, and the story flows along in an interesting and amusing manner that has you wanting to discover more. It isn't the ground-breaking title some UK mags may have led you to believe, but *Broken Sword* will provide many hours of enjoyable lightweight entertainment if you're after a change of pace from the average epilepsy-inducing PlayStation title.

Alternatives

There aren't many PC-style adventure games on the PlayStation, but *Broken Sword*, as well as Psygnosis' *Discworld* series and BMG's *Blazing Dragons* are a good start.



It's not all sunshine and lollipops. George has to get his hands dirty wading through Parisian sewers looking for clues to the killer clown's identity.

- GRAPHICS: ★★★★ Beautifully drawn backgrounds, though small things are hard to see
- SOUND: ★★★ An impressive orchestral soundtrack, but terribly dodgy accents
- GAMEPLAY: ★★★ The story manages to hold the game together and sustain interest
- LIFESPAN: ★★★ Once engrossed you'll play to the end, but probably only once
- ORIGINALITY: ★★ Point & click games are an old formula and *Broken Sword* sticks to it like glue

- OVERALL: As a point & click adventure game, *Broken Sword* holds together quite well and its sedate pace may appeal to PlayStation owners who are after a more relaxed game.

7
OUT OF TEN

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Pitball

*Grotesquely distorted athletes endowed with super-human strength.
No, this isn't the NBA, it's a description of the space mutants in this game!*

PUBLISHER:	Warner
DEVELOPER:	Warner
DISTRIBUTOR:	Warner
RELEASE:	Now
PRICE:	\$99.95
GAME TYPE:	Sport
DIFFICULTY:	Average
PLAYERS:	1 to 4
LINK UP:	No
MEMORY CARD:	Not vital
CONTROLLER:	Joypad
CLASSIFICATION:	TBA



Use power-ups (top) and punches (above) to win.

Pitball combines elements from several different styles of game to produce a futuristic sports simulation that most closely resembles two on two basketball. The idea is to shoot goals with the powerball while dealing with the opposing team in any manner necessary to keep them out of the way. Sounds simple right? Almost, but in the quest to become the champion *Pitball* team of the galaxy anything goes.

The teams compete on a 3D playing field with views similar to that of most soccer or hockey games. There's the choice of an above camera view or a close-up side view with camera panning across depending on where the player with the ball is on.

Players wear a special glove that holds the powerball (a glowing energy sphere) and are suited up with armour that enables them to launch up above the court. There is also a turbo boost to help you move around in a hurry and you can perform special debilitating moves on your opponents.

Scoring points isn't always easy as the goals are small contact points situated near the top of the pit arena on either end of the field. The trick is to jump up and throw the ball straight into the hole to score points. Power-ups are randomly available throughout the game and enhance player performance by increasing speed, throwing accuracy, power, or bestowing upon you possession of the powerball.

There are all the expected modes of

play available: single player games, two player team games and tournament play. Tournament play offers you *Pitball* at its highest level of competition and as well as taking part in the action you also manage the team, deciding what power-ups to buy, who to play and which team mates to play with. During a tournament the same options you'd find in any sports sim are available here too. The team schedule, standings, and statistical data is available for your perusal to help determine the best strategy for success.

There is training option available that gives you a chance to figure out some of the controls of the game. Played in a virtual pitball field, practice is a one-on-one practice match against either a friend or the computer, allowing you to train up a bit and actually learn how to score goals.

Being an 'intergalactic' sport, the matches are held on the different home planets of the various teams and this brings an interesting new feature into the game. Each planet has its own level of gravity and surface friction which affects how the teams play and this brings an welcome element of variety to the matches.

Sports games rely heavily on quality gameplay to keep you coming back, but unfortunately this particular aspect is very weak in *Pitball*, and first impressions don't bode particularly well. The controls are very fiddly and become increasingly frustrating as your player struggles to respond to your command. And to make matters worse, it's one of those games

where the computer never seems to make a mistake. Even the power ups, which I thought would help to even things out, tended to make the challenge one sided and unrewarding.

The other problem is that when you do manage to get the ball it can be either very easy or very hard to score, depending on where you are shooting from. If you gain possession at the tip off you can usually just jump up and shoot straight down the line for an easy goal, but from anywhere off centre it's hard to judge the correct angle.

The graphics only touch on the capabilities of the PlayStation and on the whole the courts look plain and boring. The rest of the graphics match the sluggish gameplay, from a distance the players on the same team look quite similar, while up close they look ragged and blocky.

While the press release states this is the only sim of its kind currently available on the PlayStation, I can assure you that the concept has been tried many times before on many other games systems, especially the 16-bit machines. *Pitball* is basically a futuristic variation on *NBA Jam*, with bits of *Speedball* thrown in. This is the type of game that on paper seems to have a lot going for it, but in reality just doesn't come together as well as it could have. While there are better games of this sort available, players in need of a fast competitive sport sim might like to check it out, and *Pitball* is most enjoyable as a two player game.



Each team has its own slickly rendered victory sequence

Alternatives

While the space theme gives it an identity, *Pitball* is in fact a very similar concept to *NBA Jam* or *Open Ice*. Take your pick.



From close-ups that zoom in on the players after a goal is scored to overhead views, *Pitball* has it all.

■ GRAPHICS:	★★	Nice at a glance, but flaws become obvious when you look closely
■ SOUND:	★★	Bad techno and jungle music combined with indistinct grunts.
■ GAMEPLAY:	★★★	It can be really frustrating when players don't respond quickly
■ LIFESPAN:	★★★	Bearable as a two player game, but boring on your own
■ ORIGINALITY:	★★	An old concept with a few nice twists, but not much else

■ OVERALL: *Pitball* can be a lot of fun as a multi-player game, but it lacks depth for solo players and the control is just a bit too sloppy to make it easily accessible.

6
OUT OF TEN

Black Dawn

The world is coming down around us, terrorist activity is on the rise. The only solution is to take matters into your own hands. Blue Thunder watch out!



Whether you're in the midst of a mission or just flying around, there's always something to shoot at.

As a hopeful helicopter gunner in the United States army, you'll be happy to know that terrorism is on the uprise and now is your chance to seek out and destroy the terrorist threat that is sweeping the world. Your conquest will take you across various locations around the world, destroying land and air based targets to restore peace to the world. The missions unfold on a need-to-know basis and you will visit many strange places such as Israel, New York City, Ireland and Tokyo, where you're required to conduct a series of missions along the lines of destroying enemy bases, escorting political convoys and rescuing hostages.

The action in *Black Dawn* is generally viewed from inside the helicopter's cockpit, although there are a couple of external views available. The only requirements in the way of flying skills you'll need to master are going forwards or backwards, take offs and landings, and manually ascending and

descending when necessary to get past obstacles such as trees and building structures. As the gunner, you are also responsible for the weaponry; launching missiles and making good use of the crosshairs when firing the guns.

The game begins with a mission briefing from HQ of your goals and what you can expect to be up against. Each campaign has many sub-missions that must be undertaken throughout to complete it successfully. You are given a short run-down on the mission objectives and thereafter your targets are shown on the small map in the corner of the screen as blue dots in relation to your location, which is marked by an arrow.

The actual area that you fly around in is quite small and therefore it doesn't take too much time to get around and reach your target. As a result, though, the buildings and landscape scenery shrouded by mist in the background is just that, part of the

background and if you try to fly off into the sunset you'll come to an abrupt halt when you hit the invisible wall.

As you battle your way through each mission your armour, fuel and weapon compliments steadily drop and must be replenished if you want to stay airborne. After destroying targets and enemy vehicles, a floating missile, gun, fuel or shield icon often remains which can be collected to replenish the appropriate supplies. A point score is given for destroying enemy vehicles in excess of what is necessary and a bonus is also awarded for completing the entire campaign within a set time.

With a choice of four different joypad interfaces, *Black Dawn* may seem daunting but is easy to master, with the chopper flying fast and immediately responsive to your controls. Your chopper is quite versatile, though, and it's easy to hover and look up and down to a certain degree, as well as tilting down slightly when moving forwards. But at the same time your viewpoint is rather limited, and sometimes it can be hard to hold a steady aim on the targets. This can be a pain at times, especially when an enemy plane is flying a little higher above you and about two metres in front, but generally all you have to do is line up the chosen enemy in your sights and let rip with the automatic weapon or the odd missile for stubborn foes.

Engaging the enemy can be done in two ways. You can either hang back and pick off the bogeys as they come into range, then go in and mop up the ground targets, or you can go in hell for leather with all guns blazing and hope you don't get shot up too badly. As such, it seems that at times *Black Dawn* doesn't quite know if it's a helicopter simulation or an arcade shoot 'em up. Sometimes your mission seems more like target practice than guerilla warfare, but at other times you'll be shot out of the sky before you realise what's attacking you. The handling seems a bit odd, with your chopper able to do 180° spins at full speed, but this suits the game.

Still, *Black Dawn* is a competent helicopter game with the emphasis firmly on the action side of things. The missions are reasonably engrossing and it can be quite entertaining to play, with a nice balance between full on action and a low level of strategy. Best of all, there's plenty of things to blow up!

OVERALL: An undistinguished shoot 'em up, *Black Dawn* is far from spectacular but has enough to keep it going for as long as you can take it. Quite enjoyable blasting action.

PUBLISHER:	Virgin
DEVELOPER:	Black Ops
DISTRIBUTOR:	Virgin
RELEASE:	Out now
PRICE:	\$99.95
GAME TYPE:	Chopper shooting
DIFFICULTY:	Easy/medium
PLAYERS:	One
LINK-UP:	No
CONTROLLER:	Joypad
MEMORY CARD:	Passwords
CLASSIFICATION:	G8



Tanks, explosions, helicopters and hostages to rescue. Sounds like *Choplifter* to me!

Alternatives

Soviet Strike is *Black Dawn's* biggest competition in the 'copter combat stakes, but don't overlook *Gunship 2000* and *Thunderhawk 2*.



Shoot down the civilian plane – it shoots at you! (left) Hmm... In-game advertising ahoy. (right)

GRAPHICS:	★★★
SOUND:	★★
GAMEPLAY:	★★★
LIFESPAN:	★★★
ORIGINALITY:	★

Blocky, jerky and the colours are a bit off, but do the job
Again, this side of the game can only be described as adequate
The chopper lacks a proper 'feel', but otherwise behaves fine
Loads of missions to do, but not a great deal of variety
Line 'em up, shoot 'em down. Nothing new here

7
OUT OF TEN

Street Racer

A grinning Turk, a bimbo in a bikini and one of Frankenstein's less sucessful creations are just three of the loony drivers in Ubi Soft's homage to a certain kart racing game.

PUBLISHER:	Ubisoft
DEVELOPER:	Ubisoft
DISTRIBUTOR:	Roadshow
RELEASE:	December
PRICE:	\$99.95
GAME TYPE:	Racing
DIFFICULTY:	Medium
PLAYERS:	1 - 8
LINK UP:	Yes
CONTROLLER:	Joypad
MEMORY CARD:	Optional
CLASSIFICATION:	G



Now where do you think this stage is set? Hint: It's not Brazil

Street Racer at first appears to be a derivative clone of the cult Nintendo classic *Mario Kart*. That's not such a bad thing as there hasn't really been any decent games like it, so *Street Racer* is a welcome addition to the ever growing ranks of racing games on the PlayStation. This is essentially a multi-player racing game that takes place on short, windy tracks of varying difficulty set in different countries around the world. Your opponents are seven other characters, each with a different animated style and different driving capabilities.

It features two different graphic modes of game; normal mode presents the game in the classic viewing angle of just above and behind your car, with a further two view points at varying distances, while micro mode presents the game from an overhead perspective, similar to that of another classic Nintendo game, *Micro Machines*.

The scrolling is smooth and very

fast, and the artwork and designs are of a colourful and cartoony style, which makes it appealing to all levels of players. Difficulty is set with the choice of three cup championships, Bronze, Silver and Gold, which as you continue become progressively more difficult with the courses being made up of more obstacles and sharper bends. In all there are 24 tracks to race through and besides the three cups, you can also create your own custom cup challenge by deciding which tracks will be included, the number of opponents and laps per track.

When travelling around the course you will find there are various items that you can collect which will either aid or hinder your progress in winning the race. For example, the rocket when collected will give you a turbo boost when needed, whereas if you hit a bomb you'll be spun around causing you to lose precious seconds. Other items include stars and



Humour is a strong point in Street Racers, with silly racers and even sillier cars.



money, collecting enough of these will give you bonus points at the end of the race. Further points are also awarded should you win the following bonus areas; collecting the most number of stars around the track, best lap time, punching the most opponents as well as lapping the slower players, so even if you're not winning you still have a chance when the points are tallied up.

Although it provides a fair challenge in one player mode, the most outstanding feature of *Street Racer* has to be its multi-player capabilities. You can actually play the game with up to EIGHT people at one time on the same PlayStation! This is achieved by dividing the screen into eight split-screen boxes. It is good to note that even in this mode the game still runs quickly and cleanly. The obvious drawbacks to this multi-player feature is that you need two Multitap adaptors with eight joypads, and a huge TV to ensure that the splits aren't too small. If you aren't fortunate enough to own a decent sized TV, then the game can still be played in micro mode enabling the game to be viewed from above with all cars visible on the screen at one time. Whilst there are plenty of racing games available on the PlayStation at the moment, *Street Racer* is one of few which provides satisfying multi-player entertainment. Its unique eight player capabilities, combined with fun and easy to learn gameplay, makes it accessible and enjoyable for players of all ages.



The multi-player split screen games offer the most fun. (left) It's Eddie Honda! (centre) The overhead view gives you an idea of the track layout. (right)



- GRAPHICS: ★★
- SOUND: ★★
- GAMEPLAY: ★★★
- LIFESPAN: ★★★
- ORIGINALITY: ★★

- Fast and smooth, but looks dated these days
- Happy music with adequate driving sounds and effects
- Control over the cars lacks 'feel', but it's still a lot of fun
- Good multi-player games like this last for ages, but not for one.
- Nothing revolutionary, but worthwhile

- OVERALL: Street Racer is a fun but lightweight racing game. On your own it lacks excitement, but in multi-player mode thrills abound.

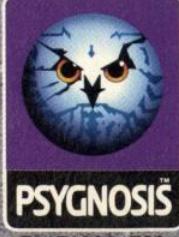
6
OUT OF TEN



PAL

PC
CD ROM

DESTRUCTION DERBY 2



711719631729

**extreme
punishment for cars**



The Adventures of Lomax

On hearing about this game you may think it's another sequel to the Lemmings puzzle games, however it is actually a classic 16-bit style platform game.

PUBLISHER:	Psygnosis
DEVELOPER:	Psygnosis
DISTRIBUTOR:	Psygnosis
RELEASE:	November
PRICE:	\$99.95
GAME TYPE:	Platform
DIFFICULTY:	Moderate
PLAYERS:	1
LINK UP:	No
CONTROLLER:	Joypad
MEM CARD:	Passwords
CLASSIFICATION:	G



A wizzled old wizard offers advice (top). Up to six special abilities are available (bottom).



Lomax relies heavily on platform game clichés such as the bouncy branches (left) and the 'run backwards to make the barrel spin forwards' trick (right).

Lemmings is one of those PC and Amiga games which you've doubtless heard about, even if you haven't played it yourself. It was based on the concept of trying to manage a swarming mass of tiny green-haired fellows which wandered back and forth, determined to throw themselves off a precipice. Your job was to guide them to safety by bestowing individual lemmings with abilities such as digging, climbing, building steps and so forth. Aware that the average PlayStation owner may not be partial to the sort of meticulous concentration required for this sort of game, yet not wanting to lose the well known *Lemmings* brand name, Psygnosis has developed an accessible platform game which tries to incorporate some of the ideas from the original.

The story goes that Lomax's fellow lemmings have been brainwashed into evil lemmings. Transformed into repugnant were-lemmings and zombie lemmings, they roam the lands doing

nefarious deeds. Defeating the evil lemmings is done by either jumping and spinning into them or by throwing your boomerang-esque magic hat, this will snap them out of their evil stupor and return them to normal. In each level there are pots that can be broken to release either coins or a task icon. The tasks items can be saved until you need them to help get around various puzzles based loosely around tasks from the original *Lemmings* games. Lomax can use them to build a bridge, dig through walls and, when he has his magic hat, use special powers which enable him to fly or turn into a flaming weapon that hits multiple enemies at once.

The overall concept of *Lomax* does borrow heavily from most platform games, although there are enough original ideas to keep dedicated platform gamers happy. Being familiar with the style of the game, and most people are, you'll quickly be at home with the plethora of moving platforms and death

traps like spikes and water. Some cool additions have been added to introduce variety and each level features up to five or six layers of left-to-right scrolling platforms behind one another. At certain points of the level Lomax can move in and out of these layers via connecting bridges or springs.

All the levels are colourful and richly detailed, with plenty of things happening on the screen. The animation of the Lomax and the lemmings is very smooth and they do have a lot of cool looking actions, for example when he hangs on to his hat while flying, or when rolling down a hill he gets dizzy and his head wobbles from side to side. Judging from the basic gameplay and cuties aspects like this, *Lomax* is obviously aimed at a younger audience.

Without an exceptional platformer to reign supreme on PlayStation, *The Adventures of Lomax* provides simplistic yet enjoyable gameplay and, while it's not a step forward, it's far from being bad.



Lomax can build steps to reach otherwise inaccessible areas (left). With a twirl of his cape, Lomax can smash open stuff and save his evil brothers (right).

Alternatives

Platform games are becoming increasingly common on the PlayStation. Of particular note are *Crash Bandicoot*, *Pandamonium* and *Earthworm Jim*.

■ GRAPHICS:	★★★
■ SOUND:	★★★
■ GAMEPLAY:	★★★★
■ LIFESPAN:	★★★
■ ORIGINALITY:	★

Repetitive, but beautifully drawn and very smooth
Jolly tunes and plenty of squeaking lemmings
Limited, but enjoyable and reasonably challenging
Heaps of levels and lots of secret things to find
The addition of the puzzles helps it stand above most

■ OVERALL: While offering nothing new, *The Adventures of Lomax* is a very slick platform game which will provide lightweight fun for novice and expert players alike.

7
OUT OF TEN



Play with 8
players
simultaneously...



Low Level
Animated Violence



a full 3D environment...



over 24 challenging
tracks...



an unbelievable race !



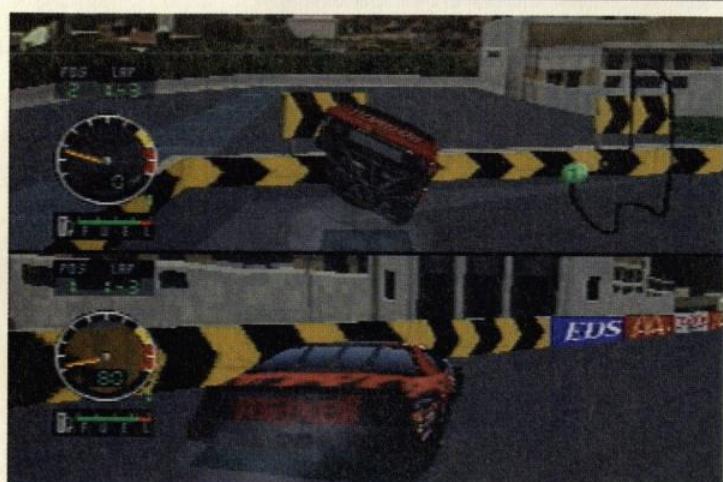
GAME BOY



Internet : <http://www.ubisoft.com>

Andretti Racing

PUBLISHER:	EA
RELEASE:	Out now
PRICE:	\$99.95
GAME TYPE:	Racing
PLAYERS:	1 or 2 split-screen
MEMORY CARD:	Save career
CONTROLLER:	Joypad
CLASSIFICATION:	G



The Andretti family is synonymous with American motor sport, father Mario, son Michael and cousin Jeff have all had and continue to have quite successful careers behind the wheel in both Indy Car and Stock Car racing, so it comes as no surprise to see their names backing Electronic Arts' attempt at recreating the thrills of the track for couch potato consumption.

The game attempts to represent the realistic facets of the sport, requiring more than just speed to win races. You have the option of deciding what tyres to use, the amount of downforce on the front and rear spoilers and gear ratios can be chosen to give either acceleration or top speed, this depends on what track you're racing on. Speed isn't necessarily the key to winning, both braking and smooth cornering are essential to getting good times and placings and, more importantly, to avoid smashing into walls and damaging your car. Pit stops also play a part in securing your victory, especially in the longer races where you need to refuel and replace worn tyres. The other cars don't help either, they often swerve across your path and bump you into corners or down the pit lane as you try to pass.

The circuits are all existing ones, mostly from around America, although it's good to see that the Surfer's Paradise Indy Car track and the Calder Park Thunderdome have been included. Strangely, the size of the tracks seems to be slightly out of proportion to the speed at which the cars handle, although this doesn't really affect the game and you probably won't notice unless you're familiar with the particular track.

Despite the wealth of options and all good intentions, *Andretti Racing* just doesn't have enough weight where it counts - in the gameplay department. The cars don't have the right 'feel' to them as they move around the tracks, the Indy Cars tend to behave skittishly and twitch around when you're trying to line up a corner, while the Stock Cars are painfully unresponsive and perform well only on the oval tracks - as is the case in real life. It's not too bad, though, and some fun can be had once you get used to the way the cars handle. The two-player split-screen (up to four players when linked to another PlayStation) is probably the most compelling reason to buy this game, but in light of the competition from a certain other racing game out there, *Andretti Racing* places a distant second.

- GRAPHICS: ★★★
- SOUND: ★★
- GAMEPLAY: ★★★
- LIFESPAN: ★★★
- ORIGINALITY: ★

- OVERALL: Poor control mars what could have been quite a good racing game, although the split-screen option is a welcome addition and is the best thing *Andretti Racing*.

6
OUT OF TEN

Penny Racers

PUBLISHER:	Takara
RELEASE:	Out now
PRICE:	\$89.95
GAME TYPE:	Put-Put Racing
PLAYERS:	1 or 2 split-screen
MEMORY CARD:	Yes
CONTROLLER:	Joypad
CLASSIFICATION:	G

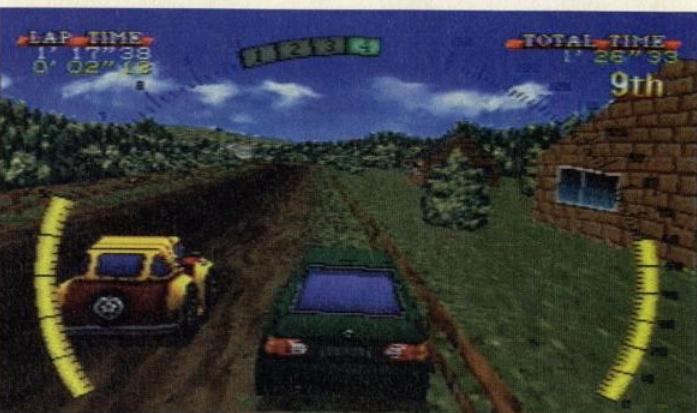


First impressions of *Penny Racers* may disappoint, as you are confronted with an initial choice of only three simple tracks and graphics which at times can only be likened to the first generation of PlayStation titles. It is only when you look at the features of the game and sit down and play it for a while that it begins to redeem itself, and can at least be recommended for the less discerning game player.

There are two game modes available to select in *Penny Racers*, Freeplay and Grand Prix, with the latter being the more interesting. In Grand Prix mode, which requires a memory card to save any further tracks you progress to, you race against several opponents in a bid to win race points and money. The race points are essential to win the championship and move on to other tracks, whilst the money lets you upgrade your car with various items available from the autoshop. This certainly adds to the lastability of the game, the incentive to win the races for the higher cash prizes is driven by the need to upgrade your car to keep up with the competition. Once you have bought the necessary upgrades you can choose a car set-up that works well on the different tracks, for example the dirt tyres which are a must on off-road track if you want to finish the race with any chance of victory.

The two main nuances of *Penny Racers* are as follows: Firstly, the driving of your vehicle, which of course is what the game is about, turns out to be a non-event. Even after purchasing some fantastic upgrades for your car you still having the same problems, such as cornering, as you had without them. You have to slow right down to a crawl to make it around sharp corners without hitting the side scenery, yet the computer cars seem to fly around them, and you can never ease the brakes on and slide around the corner comfortably. The other fault is the graphics. These, whilst smooth in the less detailed tracks, soon becomes a chunky, glitchy mess when you crash into the side scenery, especially in the more detailed scenarios, and the two-player split-screen game is woeful to say the least!

Whilst clearly not setting itself out to be the definitive driving simulation, the smaller cars and ease of controls will have an appeal to the younger players rather than hardcore racing fanatics. If you do bother to stick it out, *Penny Racers* can be a rewarding game, but with so many other better driving games available, you have to ask the question 'Is it worth it?' The answer, as you may have guessed, is 'No, it isn't.'



- GRAPHICS: ★
- SOUND: ★
- GAMEPLAY: ★★
- LIFESPAN: ★★
- ORIGINALITY: ★

4
OUT OF TEN

International Moto X

PUBLISHER:	Warner
RELEASE:	Out now
PRICE:	\$99.95
GAME TYPE:	Racing
PLAYERS:	One
MEMORY CARD:	Useful
CONTROLLER:	Joypad
CLASSIFICATION:	G



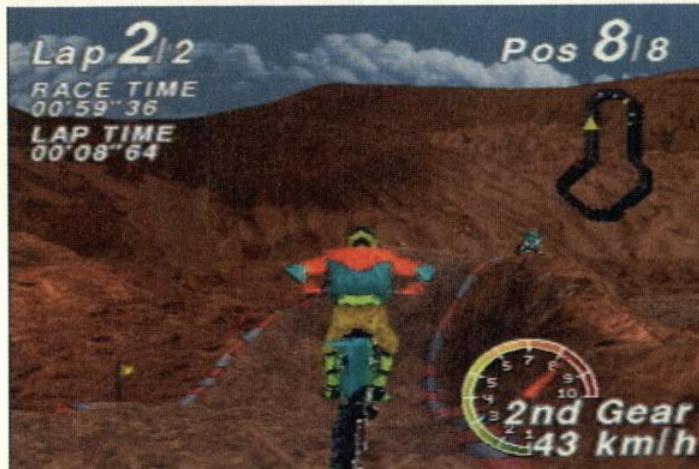
The scarcity of decent motorbike games is a shameful state of affairs on just about every game format, with *Road Rash* being the only outstanding one.

Starting your racing career on a weedy little 125cc bike, your aim is to work your way up through the races, winning enough points to make you the class champion, whereupon you graduate to the faster 250cc bikes. To help you get there, prize money is awarded for the top three positions in each race and it can be put toward upgrading components of your bike such as the engine, suspension and tyres. Unfortunately, you also have to use this money to pay for repairs sustained during the race. Land too hard or spend too much time off the track and you'll barely afford to keep your bike in the running, let alone improve upon it.

Trying to balance the cost of repairs with buying new bike bits is one of the more annoying things about the game, and the fact that you're stuck in the 125cc class until you've won on all the tracks makes the going quite painful during the early stages. Far better would have been for the developers to offer a small selection of adequately powered bikes from the start, negating the need to constantly refurbish them just to stay in the running. This sort of arcade-style accessibility would have made the game much more enjoyable, as it is each victory comes as more of a relief than something to celebrate about.

The control over the bikes does leave a little to be desired and it's not until you have a decent 250cc bike that you can really begin to enjoy this game. At higher levels when you're going much faster the seemingly random placement of hills makes sense, launch off them with enough velocity and you'll be able to clear the valleys in between. Taking corners at high speed is a lot more fun, too, as the bikes start to slide out a bit rather than simply turning into the bends.

Although International Moto X has its fair share of faults, under the lacklustre surface lies a reasonable motorbike game. The lack of instant appeal and dull presentation will turn a lot of people off, but if you're desperate for a dirt bike game, this is the only one available for now.



- GRAPHICS: ★★
- SOUND: ★
- GAMEPLAY: ★★★
- LIFESPAN: ★★★
- ORIGINALITY: ★★★

■ OVERALL: Far from exciting, *International Moto X* requires a lot of patience to get the most out of it and might not be what you want in an off-road bike game.

6
OUT OF TEN

Road Rash

PUBLISHER:	EA
RELEASE:	Out now
PRICE:	\$99.95
GAME TYPE:	Bike racing
PLAYERS:	One
MEMORY CARD:	No
CONTROLLER:	Joypad
CLASSIFICATION:	G8



When *Road Rash* first came out on the Megadrive all those years ago (actually only a few), it was greeted with howls of admiration from gamers after a racing game that offered something more than just a dash to the finish line, and the pleasure derived is in ensuring that the competition doesn't.

Not a great deal has changed since its inception, the basic gameplay remains the same and the graphics are fairly bland, not to mention a tad repetitive. This can be excused by the fact that it is actually a conversion of the 3DO version, although it should be pointed out that the PlayStation edition has been 'cleaned up', and runs a bit faster and smoother.

All the old weapons are available and just as nasty, while the kick has noticeably more effect, pushing the other riders a fair way off to the side rather than just injuring them. This leads to many hilarious escapades involving oncoming traffic, the most satisfying way to dispatch the competition in, especially the pigs!

And pigs they are, for no self respecting honest police officer is going to let himself get caught on video doing some of the things these filth get away with in the FMV sequences following an arrest. Handcuffed to the back of a speeding copper chopper, having the dogs set upon you and sinfully being locked in the boot of the patrol car are just some of the fates awaiting unlucky riders, but they're not nearly so humiliating as when you wreck your bike or lose a race - fellow Rashers have no mercy! While these clips add nothing to the actual game (and take an age to load - grr!), they do provide a light-hearted respite from the intensity of the frantic racing.

Notwithstanding the poor graphics and equally dire sound, *Road Rash* is an immensely enjoyable experience. There's not really a lot to it other than anticipating corners and whacking the other bikers, therefore reaction time is a factor, so please pay attention. Otherwise you may hit an innocent pedestrian crossing the road, or one of those taxis that changes lanes in a manner frighteningly like real ones do.

The combination of reckless abandon and the thrill of taking blind corners at 200kph on the wrong side of the road (don't forget that you're in America) sweeps away any reservations you may have about it (other than the lack of a two-player game - it's not even link-up! Double grrr!!) and while it doesn't showcase the PlayStation's abilities, *Road Rash* is the sort of game that's just too much fun to resist having another go at.

- GRAPHICS: ★★
- SOUND: ★★
- GAMEPLAY: ★★★★
- LIFESPAN: ★★★★
- ORIGINALITY: ★★

■ OVERALL: Despicable behaviour, absolutely shocking. Give me another go NOW!

7
OUT OF TEN

Robotron X

PUBLISHER:	Williams
RELEASE:	December
PRICE:	\$89.95
GAME TYPE:	Blaster
PLAYERS:	One
MEMORY CARD:	No
CONTROLLER:	Joypad
CLASSIFICATION:	G8+



Dredging up old classics and doing them up with fancy graphics is met with mixed reactions across the gaming community and *Robotron X* is bound to polarise players either strongly in favour or against it.

Based on the fairly simple premise of you in a room with a gun, and an unending stream of robot clones to use it upon, *Robotron X* offers one of the most butt-clenchingly intense games ever. From the moment you take control to the instant you become smothered under the advancing hordes, your attention will be riveted to the screen and the fire buttons kept firmly pressed throughout.

This is not a game for the faint hearted or those who like to think about their next move, for in *Robotron X* there is no time to think, only to react instantaneously. It provides a strangely compelling, yet virtually unbeatable challenge that doesn't let up until your last life is taken from you by the crushing steel claws of a remorseless robot.

As it is, *Robotron X* would appear to make a brilliant arcade game and in fact that is exactly what it was. The original is already available in the form of *Williams's Arcade Classics* and provides just as much frantic excitement and tension as this 'tarted up' for the '90s' re-release, so if you're keen to play *Robotron* for old time's sake then you may as well go for this one - it's cheaper and you get some other cool old titles.

In turning the world of *Robotron* into a texture mapped polygon-fest, the programmers have had to make a few small compromises. To give the player a closer view of the action the camera angle tilts and pans over the playing field, but this sometimes leaves you without a clear view of your surroundings. There is a fixed overhead view on offer, but the result is not much different from the original and you're back to where it all started.

Robotron X is a really good game, but it's not the sort of thing you want to spend too much money on - it's more of an occasional blaster than an ongoing conquest. The fact that you can save to a level in the game may be a serious flaw in its longevity, as it sort of voids the challenge in seeing how long you can last up against ridiculous odds. Now if they had resurrected this game's sequel, *Smash TV*, we would have been very excited.



- GRAPHICS: ★★★
- SOUND: ★★★
- GAMEPLAY: ★★★★
- LIFESPAN: ★★★
- ORIGINALITY: ★★★

■ OVERALL: *Robotron X* is a cleverly designed blaster with a huge challenge, but after shelling out big bucks you may be left wondering "Is this all there is to it?"

6
OUT OF TEN

Final Doom

PUBLISHER:	GT/Williams
RELEASE:	Out now
PRICE:	\$99.95
GAME TYPE:	Virtual killing
PLAYERS:	One
MEMORY CARD:	Passwords
CONTROLLER:	Joypad/Mouse
CLASSIFICATION:	MA15+



There's very little left to say about *Doom* that hasn't already been said. It's a landmark game that has changed the way people look at games in an infinite number of ways. Period.

Its popularity can be put down to one factor in particular, that it 'feels' real. When one of the foul creatures inhabiting its twisted worlds starts chewing on the back of your neck, you literally get shivers up your spine and bolt for the nearest exit immediately, your pulse rate peaking with the adrenaline rush. Not many games can evoke this sort of emotion in players dulled by countless games where you have to rip out your opponents vertebrae, or some such preposterous behaviour, but *Doom* is one of few that really can.

Final Doom on the PlayStation is, for the cynically minded, more of the same. It features three huge episodes (don't believe the back of the box, it's a misprint - official word from Sony) taken from the PC; *Final Doom's TNT* and *Plutonia*, plus the *Master Levels* which came out on PC a while ago. These new levels are all very well designed, as you would expect at this stage in *Doom*'s maturity, and this PlayStation version has a number of significant improvements of the first one. The textures now have a greater resolution and the construction of the levels has very few faults, only the occasional seam between sections of panelling is sometimes evident.

Most importantly, however, is the inclusion of mouse support. Basically, *Final Doom* is the best reason to get a mouse for your PlayStation. Forget those sissy adventure games and fiddly strategy sims, *Doom* and the mouse are a match made in Heaven. It allows so much more freedom of movement that going back to the joypad alone feels like your fingers are bound with gaffer tape. Targeting the enemies at any distance becomes a piece of cake and the ability to make razor sharp turns and instant 180° spins is invaluable - *Final Doom* is a very intense game, if you can't manoeuvre quickly enough you'll soon die painfully, most likely trapped in a corner. You will have to hold the half the joypad in your left hand for basic functions such as moving forward and backwards for extended periods and the shoulder buttons are great for the speed and use commands or weapon selection, though it may take you a while to find a configuration that suits you.

If you've a lone player and have already got the original *Doom*, you may want to think twice about purchasing it for what is essentially the second time. However, if you have any desire at all to experience the unmatched terror and fear provided by this brilliant game, you won't be disappointed.



- GRAPHICS: ★★★★
- SOUND: ★★★★★
- GAMEPLAY: ★★★★★
- LIFESPAN: ★★★★
- ORIGINALITY: ★

■ OVERALL: A masterpiece of gut-wrenching suspense backed up with the most solid action you'll come across, *Final Doom* is a must. Get it and a mouse now!

9
OUT OF TEN

STOP THIS EVIL

RESIDENT EVIL™

Pure unadulterated terror distilled into
an interactive game only for the PlayStation



PlayStation™



MA 15+

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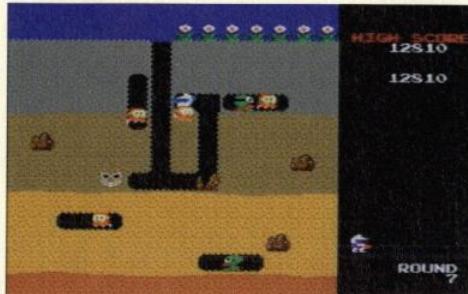


VIRGIN
INTERACTIVE
entertainment

CAPCOM

Namco Museum vol. 3

PUBLISHER:	Namco
RELEASE:	Out now
PRICE:	\$89.95
GAME TYPE:	Arcade classics
PLAYERS:	One
MEMORY CARD:	No
CONTROLLER:	Joypad
CLASSIFICATION:	G



For those keen on sampling from the vaults of Namco's software library, *Namco Museum Vol.3* features another six titles that will either bring back a fleeting sense of nostalgia or a quick setting sensation of boredom!

The Tower of Druaga is an ancient scrolling quest game where you wander around a maze-like structure. Slay all the nasties in your path with a hopelessly useless sword, collect a key and use it to exit through a door to the next level. Ho hum.

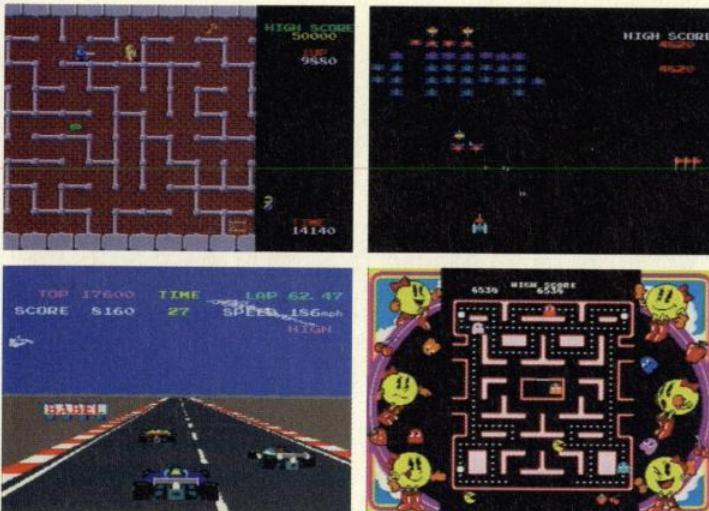
Pole Position II is an arcade-style racing game, but unfortunately time has been quite harsh on this 'classic'. The corners are so abrupt and the steering is so ridiculously sensitive that one would find *Wipeout* a breeze to learn in comparison!

Phozon (not pictured) is totally baffling! Something about combining molecules, into shapes while avoiding the bubbles. Hmmm...

Gender aside, *Ms Pac Man* plays exactly the same as her male counterpart. If you already have the original on the other Museum release, there's very little to recommend about this one. Otherwise, the addiction factor is still there. Just.

In *Dig Dug* you have to blow up your enemies. No, not as in pyrotechnics, but as in literally filling them up with air and bursting them! First you have to dig your way to them, watching for rocks overhead that can either crush your foes or yourself if you're not careful! The nasties can also turn into ghosts and creep up on you or blast you with fire, so watch out! Quite fun to play, actually.

The vertical shooter *Galaxian* is arguably the most famous title in this collection. Although *Galaga* is more fun to play, this is still a classic. It's absurdly basic in gameplay and graphics, yet it's stylish and somehow draws you back for another round... and another. But alas, the obsession is short lived. Honestly, when you've got the likes of *Tekken 2* and *Wipeout 2097* nearby, what are you really going to play?



- GRAPHICS: ★
- SOUND: ★
- GAMEPLAY: ★★
- LIFESPAN: ★
- ORIGINALITY: ★

■ OVERALL: Some of the games you'd probably play once in a while for nostalgia's sake, but unless you're a retro nut, save your cash for something more worthwhile.

4
OUT OF TEN

Tilt

PUBLISHER:	Virgin
RELEASE:	January
PRICE:	\$99.95
GAME TYPE:	Pinball sim
PLAYERS:	One
MEMORY CARD:	No
CONTROLLER:	Standard
CLASSIFICATION:	G

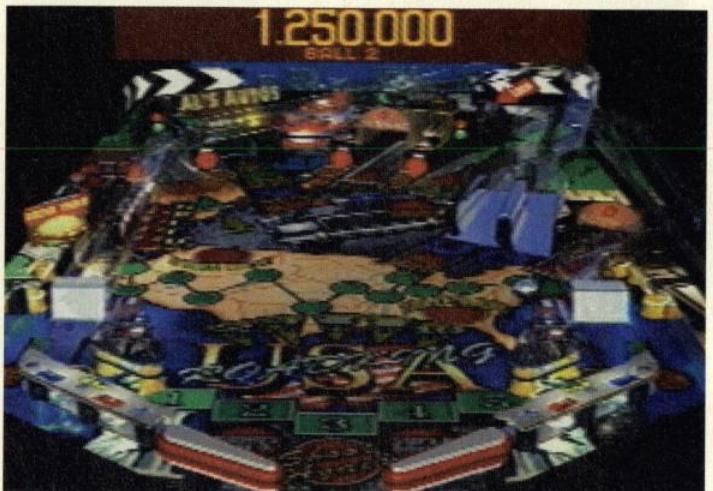


Tilt is essentially a pinball arcade on a CD. With only six tables it may seem more like a pub's games room than an arcade, but compared to some pinball games which offer only one table, *Tilt* is a veritable bonanza. Each table has an attract mode saying 'Please play me!', as you would expect to find in an arcade. The look and feel of each table is very slick, with colourful themes and beautifully rendered graphics direct from a Silicon Graphics machine.

The six tables on offer are each styled around a classic cliche and accompanied by a befitting soundtrack. There's a car chase table, a fun fair one, a medieval one, a '20s gangster movie one, a '50s monster movie one and an outer-space table.

You have a choice between two viewpoints through which to see the table, one is an overhead view which scrolls up and down the table tracking the ball, while the other view is a three quarter view perspective looking up the table, as if you were standing in front of the machine. While this gives a very nice 3D feel, it unfortunately leaves the upper section of the table difficult to see as you can't lean over to see where your ball has disappeared to. This causes consternation when you achieve multiball and the game automatically defaults to the three quarter 3D mode, but it is fair to say that when you get multiball on a real machine, you don't really have time to aim when you're furiously trying to keep all the balls in play!

Typical of all decent pinball sims is 'shake the table' button which comes in handy to stop a ball going down the gurgler, but be wary not to tilt the machine. As well as the traditional functions of a pinball, *Tilt* is in tune with current pinball technology and each table features its own dot matrix display where animations and scoring info takes place. The quality of the actual game of pinball is very slick and the flipper response is immediate, although you don't really get a feel for the weight of the ball. *Tilt* is a remarkably attractive package and well worth a look for video-pinball freaks, however when it comes down to it, nothing will replace the solid bumpers and flippers of the real thing.



- GRAPHICS: ★★★
- SOUND: ★
- GAMEPLAY: ★★★
- LIFESPAN: ★★★
- ORIGINALITY: ★

■ OVERALL: If playing pinball on your television gets you excited, head off and buy *Tilt*. However, you may be better off heading to the arcade and playing real thing.

6
OUT OF TEN

**ALL THAT STANDS
BETWEEN YOU AND THEM
IS THIS**

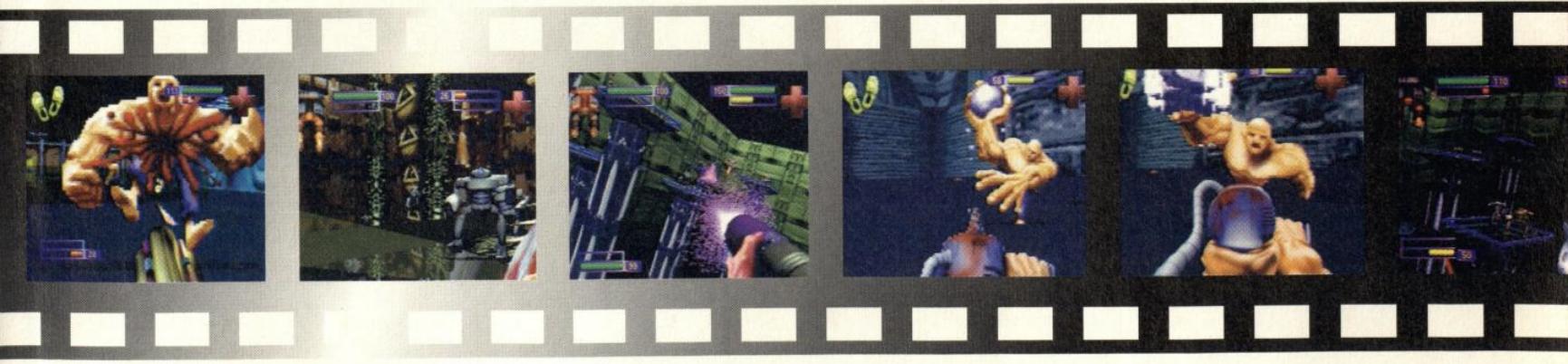


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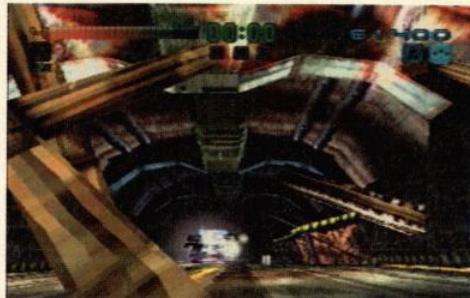
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PlayStationTM

Tunnel B1

PUBLISHER:	Ocean
RELEASE:	Out now
PRICE:	\$89.95
GAME TYPE:	Shooter
PLAYERS:	One
MEMORY CARD:	Yes
CONTROLLER:	Joypad
CLASSIFICATION:	G8

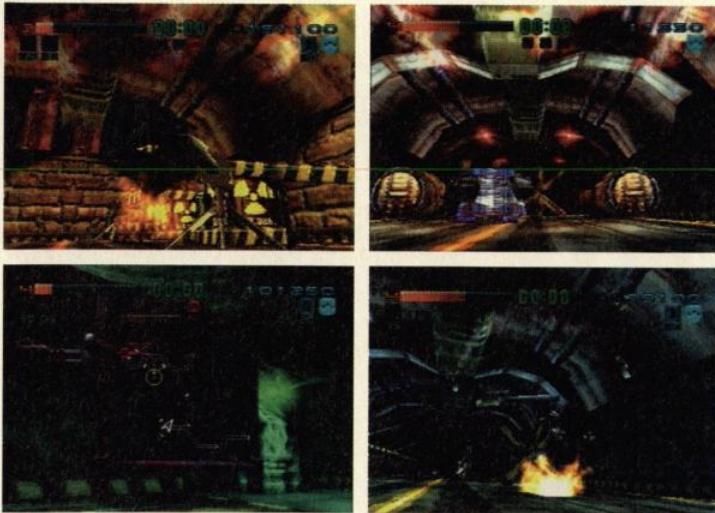


Described vaguely as a cross between *Descent* and *Wipeout*, *Tunnel B1* puts you at the helm of a sleek hovercraft fighter blasting through the labyrinth of tunnels in the enemy's territory. Naturally, as you proceed through each mission, you accumulate a hefty arsenal of weapons like missiles, lasers, mines and smart bombs with which to waste any enemy craft or automated gun/grenade pods that lie in your path. A map screen provides an overview of the entire level, as well as the location of necessary objectives you have to achieve, whether they be destroying or collecting an object.

Despite lacking the total 3D freedom of *Descent*, *Tunnel B1* will send many grabbing their sick bags - the swaying motion of your craft is perhaps the most stomach churning of them all! But don't forget to check out the superb graphics; the environment is packed with dense texture-mapped detail that glides past oh-so-smoothly and the fantastic lighting effects which provide plenty of atmosphere, further heightened by the booming cinematic soundtrack. The sound effects are good, but even with the explosions and weapons turned right up you'll wish they were chunkier.

Unfortunately, *Tunnel B1* proves a tad lacklustre in terms of depth to the gameplay when compared with the likes of *Descent*. While vastly superior visually, you experience very little fear in this game as you come across your enemies and despite being very slickly designed, they nevertheless lack a menacing look or the terrifying presence to freeze you in your tracks!

By having the entire level handed to you on a plate in the form of the map, the sense of mystery surrounding its size as well as the exploration factor in searching for the way out is greatly diminished, although the scenery still provides lots of movement and pretty colours to look at. Thankfully you can still get some surprises, such as when you inadvertently trigger alarms as you zoom past certain light barriers. Fleeing enemy craft that prompt you into a winding chase through the tunnels livens things up, as do the missions with a set time limit, but the game never really gets much past the stop-start stage.



- GRAPHICS: ★★★★
- SOUND: ★★★
- GAMEPLAY: ★★★
- LIFESPAN: ★★★
- ORIGINALITY: ★★★

■ OVERALL: It's fast, looks good and is quite challenging, however *Tunnel B1* lacks that special something which distinguishes a good game from a great one.

7
OUT OF TEN

Power Move Wrestling

PUBLISHER:	Activision
RELEASE:	January
PRICE:	\$99.95
GAME TYPE:	Pro wrestling
PLAYERS:	1 - 2
MEMORY CARD:	No
CONTROLLER:	Joypad
CLASSIFICATION:	G8 expected



Professional wrestling can be a whole lot of fun as a video game, providing that it's done properly. Large sweaty men in pink tights rolling about a ring has it's own unique appeal.

Despite never really taking off here in Australia, pro-wrestling is big business in the US and Japan, where droves of people go to see a friendly fight or two between burly pieces of meat. Part of the attraction is the wrestlers themselves. Each competitor has his own distinct personality and patented fighting moves - the more ridiculous looking and sounding the better. Everything is larger than life, and in a big way. Unfortunately, this is where *Power Move Pro Wrestling* is lacking, in not being licensed to a high profile organisation such as the WWF.

Developed in Japan by Tomy, *Power Move Pro Wrestling* is an admirable attempt at bringing the essence of wrestling straight out of the stadiums and into the home. Choosing from a pool of a dozen fighters, you can play either an exhibition match, championship, League or tournament. There are plenty of options too, like match length, viewing angle (first or second floor). But where a wrestling game comes into its own is with the actual fighting, and thankfully, this game does it quite well.

There are plenty of standard moves to do like clothes-lines, bear hugs, the climb-up-the-post-and-jump move, as well as a host of other painful looking holds. A little tricky at first to get used to, you'll be pounding your opponent with ease and skill in no time.

Using shaded polygons, *Power Move Pro Wrestling* initially appears rather bland, but the graphics do the job fairly well, although the fighters glide around the canvas rather than taking steps. The sounds are cool too - the crowd cheers and chants your name as you get too close to finishing your opponent.

While *Power Move Pro Wrestling* is a respectable attempt, it fails to bring the excitement and personality of pro wrestling to the PlayStation. Of the twelve characters to choose from, none of them really stand out (except for King Og). The moves, while many and varied, are all the traditional styles with few outrageous attacks to get you laughing (or crying). A major disappointment was the fact that the wrestlers themselves were totally mute! No grunts when lifting a 150kg beast or torturous cries of agony when knackered in the groin area.

If you're looking for a bit of wrestling fun, *Power Move Pro Wrestling* is a lot of fun, but don't expect too much. Would have been infinitely better if there was more of an extravagant feel to it.



- GRAPHICS: ★★★
- SOUND: ★★
- GAMEPLAY: ★★★
- LIFESPAN: ★★
- ORIGINALITY: ★★

■ OVERALL: By no means a bad title, *Power Move Pro Wrestling* provides a fair bit of fun, but lacks the thrills and excitement of the American sport.

6
OUT OF TEN

Grid Runner

PUBLISHER:	Virgin
RELEASE:	January
PRICE:	\$99.95
GAME TYPE:	MAZE CHASING
PLAYERS:	1 to 4, link up
MEMORY CARD:	NO
CONTROLLER:	Joypad
CLASSIFICATION:	G



Grid Runner is a game of chasings, or 'catch and tip' as some people like to call it, with a variance of the 'capture the flag' theme thrown in for good measure.

The aim of the game is to progress through each stage collecting a set number of flags which are scattered throughout the level. In the single player games your opponents are controlled by the computer and are selected from an assortment of weird aliens and droids, each with varying abilities.

The first player to capture the flag forces the 'it' upon the other player and when you're 'it', you have to chase your opponent and tag them before you can go and claim any of the flags as your own. Each flag captured changes to your colour, but can be recaptured for a victory. Sounds complicated, but it's not, in fact it's a simple idea that works very well.

Chasing each other around the mazes would normally lose its appeal quite quickly, but this is where the power up's come in. Each player has a gun and mines which you use to make things more difficult for the other player. The weapons don't actually kill the players, but they do slow their progress enough to give the pursued a chance to escape. There's also a bridge building function that allows you to make short cuts across gaps and to gain access to remote places flags. Power-ups are scattered around the paths as well and include such bonuses as temporary shields and speed boosts. Many stages also feature teleporters, moving pathways and zip points that propel you cannon-like across the level.

Part of *Grid Runner*'s charm is the intricate and varied level design. They are fairly easy to complete during the earlier stages, but become progressively harder to finish as you go along, resulting in frantic chase sessions that can last for ages. Of course, two-player split screen games are far more entertaining to play, and four-player games courtesy of the link-up feature are even more frantic, approaching the intensity of the almighty *Bomberman*. Battles become much more aggressive and drawn out and are harder to win. You're also forced to create cunning strategies to win.

Grid Runner is a unique game that holds up quite well in the one-player matches, but comes into its own as a multi-player title.

■ GRAPHICS:	★★★
■ SOUND:	★★
■ GAMEPLAY:	★★★★
■ LIFESPAN:	★★★
■ ORIGINALITY:	★★★

■ OVERALL: While nothing exceptional in terms of graphics and sound, *Grid Runner* is a nice change from the usual dirge and is worth checking out.

7
OUT OF TEN

Blast Chamber

PUBLISHER:	Activision
RELEASE:	December
PRICE:	\$99.95
GAME TYPE:	Tumble dryer
PLAYERS:	1 to 4
MEMORY CARD:	Not needed
CONTROLLER:	Joypad
CLASSIFICATION:	G8+



Blast Chamber. For me the name evokes haunting memories of lazy Sunday afternoons, sitting on the back porch listening to my dad squeeze out the loudest, most heinous farts you've ever heard, through the bottom of his comfy chair. But I digress, this is *Blast Chamber* the game, and it has nothing whatever to do with flatulence. Well, almost nothing anyway.

Blast Chamber is a futuristic sports game, futuristic because the sport doesn't actually exist. It's basically all about four men in latex suits with time bombs strapped to their backs running around grabbing a little star thingy and standing on the reactor pads that are located around each chamber. The chambers can be rotated by the players by pushing on specially marked areas of their walls, as each of the walls corresponds to the colours of the players. When you've got the star and you stand on your reactor pad, time is added to your constantly decreasing bomb counter, and when you stand on the reactor pad of an opponent time is taken away from them, hastening their demise.

There are three variations on the game. Solo Survivor puts you alone in a series of increasingly difficult chambers. The Free-For-All puts up to four players into one chamber, with each pushing and prodding the others out of their way to put the star into their own reactors for points. The Eliminator game is virtually identical to the Free-For-All, except that you only get one life. Life drains away the longer you go without scoring, so it's important to keep dropping those stars as often as possible.

The concept behind *Blast Chamber* is quite ingenious, however the limitation of being stuck in a box does become tiresome after a while. The players never have the star long enough to do anything coordinated with it and victory is often determined by just happening to be standing in the right place at the right time. As a multi-player game, though, *Blast Chamber* has potential, but it's best as a team sport where you can work with your partner rather than as a free for all.

As a single player game *Blast Chamber* just isn't that interesting and the computer players seem to be able to take the star from you much more easily than you can take it off them, which is rather frustrating to say the least. An interesting title that may appeal to people who prefer to play with their friends than against the machine.



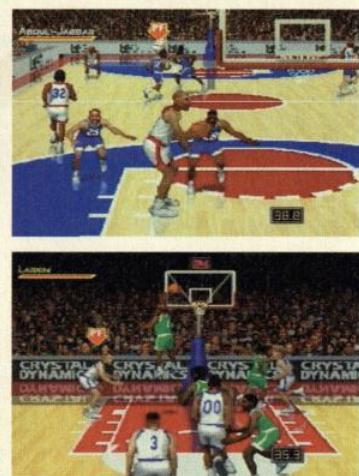
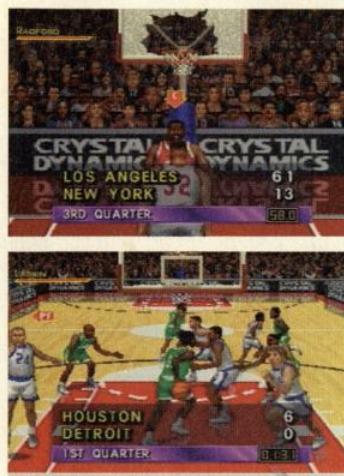
■ GRAPHICS:	★★★
■ SOUND:	★★
■ GAMEPLAY:	★★★
■ LIFESPAN:	★★★
■ ORIGINALITY:	★★★★★

■ OVERALL: *Blast Chamber* may not appeal to everyone, but it's great for multi-player freaks and those after something different from the normal fare.

7
OUT OF TEN

Slam 'N' Jam

PUBLISHER:	Crystal Dynamics
RELEASE:	Out now
PRICE:	\$69.95
GAME TYPE:	Basketball
PLAYERS:	1 - 4
MEMORY CARD:	No
CONTROLLER:	Joypad
CLASSIFICATION:	G



With so many basketball games being released these days, any new games have to keep their production standards high and offer something different so as to remain competitive. *Slam 'N' Jam* succeeds in this area by presenting a polished, smooth game which should keep most armchair basketball fans happy.

This game is not a licensed NBA product and as a result it doesn't contain any current NBA teams or players, however it does boast the inclusion of LA Lakers veterans Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and Earvin "Magic" Johnson. You can select from various international and All-Star teams, but the American teams bear no resemblance to the NBA teams from the same cities. This is a cosmetic point, though, and it doesn't really detract from the quality of the actual game.

In a departure from the traditional side-on perspective of most basketball games, *Slam 'N' Jam* is viewed from the end of the court, behind the back board. This can make it a little easier to see what's going on but, as with all full-team basketball games, it can get a little crowded at times. Although they are composed of sprites, as opposed to polygons which are more fashionable these days, the animation of the players is quite good and there is a fine selection of moves with some spectacular alley-oops and earth shattering slam dunks.

Despite its ageing appearance, *Slam 'N' Jam* is actually quite a good game. While it can be a little difficult to control at first, the moves are fairly easily mastered and the breakneck speed of the action makes this one of the better basketball games around.

The sound is fairly standard sports game stuff, with fat beats on the intro and menu screens and fairly sparse commentary during the game. This is perfectly adequate and at least they haven't ruined it with bad music throughout, but you feel they could have done a bit more.

It's not going to please those who are after a full and proper simulation of the sport, but *Slam 'N' Jam*'s blend of realistic basketball and arcade-style action makes for an enjoyable if somewhat unspectacular game of basketball. If you can live without the endorsement of the NBA (and some people won't be able to) you'll find a good game that offers plenty of options to keep it interesting, with Kareem and Magic to keep you entertained.

■ GRAPHICS:	★★
■ SOUND:	★★
■ GAMEPLAY:	★★★
■ LIFESPAN:	★★★★
■ ORIGINALITY:	★

■ OVERALL: Although it offers little that you probably haven't already seen, *Slam 'N' Jam* is a worthy addition to the ranks of basketball games.

6
OUT OF TEN

Gex

PUBLISHER:	Crystal Dynamics
RELEASE:	Out now
PRICE:	\$69.95
GAME TYPE:	Platform
PLAYERS:	One
MEMORY CARD:	No
CONTROLLER:	Joypad
CLASSIFICATION:	G



Gex is a couch potato lizard who's been sucked into a media dimension by the evil genius Rez, and now he must escape by, you guessed it, jumping on little platforms and collecting stuff. Is this beginning to sound familiar?

Once you've passed through the superbly animated opening sequence (nude funkercise?!) you'll discover that *Gex* is a traditional side-scrolling platform game not unlike hundreds of others which have passed before it over the years.

The visual side of things offers little to get excited about. *Gex* himself is quite nicely modelled and he moves along smoothly with fairly good control, but the backgrounds are fairly uninteresting and appear dull and flat. Many of the worlds through which *Gex* travels offer potential for creative design, but little has been done to take advantage of this.

In terms of the actual game, *Gex* is a curious affair. Some of the levels are all over the place, with little indication of where you should be heading and not much of an idea of what you're supposed to do when you get there, with the goals undefined and the journeys to them aimless. You keep playing through level after level of inconsequential action, thinking that something cool is about to happen, but it never does.

Gex's featured attribute is his ability to climb up walls and hang upside down from ceilings thanks to the suction pads on his paws. He can also walk on the background walls in caves and rooms, but this is more of a novelty than an integral part of the game.

One point where *Gex* does shine, though, is the sound. The producers have tried to liven up the game by giving its main character a cavalcade of one-liners to spout forth at every opportunity. When *Gex* isn't making a snappy remark himself, there is an unending collection of film and television samples for trainspotters to get excited about; including Shaggy from *Scooby Doo*, Homer, Rocky and many more.

While *Gex* appears to be a fairly good game at face value, it does become increasingly difficult to maintain an interest in it through some of the more monotonous stages and some players may find the game a bit pointless. The production values are slick, but when compared to newer opposition such as *Crash Bandicoot* and *Pandemonium*, *Gex* doesn't stand up too well. In fact, after playing the game for a while I had the feeling that I'd played it a thousand times before and was of the opinion that, as *Gex* is so fond of saying, "If I had a life, I'd like to get back to it now!"



■ GRAPHICS:	★★
■ SOUND:	★★★
■ GAMEPLAY:	★★
■ LIFESPAN:	★★
■ ORIGINALITY:	★

■ OVERALL: Whilst it does have some neat features, *Gex* is best recommended for the incurable platform game junkie.

5
OUT OF TEN

Blazing Dragons

PUBLISHER:	BMG
RELEASE:	Out now
PRICE:	\$89.95
GAME TYPE:	Adventure
PLAYERS:	One
MEMORY CARD:	Password
CONTROLLER:	Joypad
CLASSIFICATION:	G



Something is amiss in the Kingdom of Camelot. Senile King All-Fire has decided to abdicate and has chosen to hold a royal tournament to appoint his successor. The winner will receive the crown and, of course, the king's daughter. However, there are those who have other plans coming to fruition... Welcome to the bizarre world of *Blazing Dragons*, a point & click style adventure based on characters created by Monty Python's Terry Jones and, as you can imagine, it gets really quite strange at times.

This is mainly a puzzle solving adventure with some arcade style sequence, but the main concerns are running around picking stuff up, talking to people and so on. Unlike some adventures, though, in this game you are free to go to anywhere as often as you like, so you don't get the annoying scenario of "Oh, I've almost finished the game but I forgot to pick up the spatula in the first scene so I'll have to start again."

Blazing Dragons has chosen a cartoon style environment and it works well, with smooth animation and fine attention to detail. One problem some people might have with this game is that sometimes it's a bit limited in its scope for exploration, but to counter this there is only one place where you can use each item to solve a puzzle correctly and you can't use them elsewhere, so there's less chance of making a hideous mess of the puzzles, which sometimes require quite lateral thinking. Flicker, the green scaled star of the story, uses a scrolling icon menu to look, walk, talk or get and use an item and this system works quite competently. One of the things which made this game for me was the excellent use of voices. You can choose to have text on the screen as well, but why would you want to with the vocal talents of Terry Jones, Cheech Marin and Harry Shearer (Mr Burns and Otto in *The Simpsons*) involved.

To distinguish it from the usual point 'n' click adventure game, *Blazing Dragons* features a number of arcade sections that include throwing live cats at pop up targets with a catapult, a odd dancing bit and some thumb wrestling.

All up, *Blazing Dragons* is a highly entertaining adventure with quite a strange sense of humour, and some of the locations and characters will have you scratching your head and reaching for the home made prozac. Make mine a double.



■ GRAPHICS:	★★★★
■ SOUND:	★★★★
■ GAMEPLAY:	★★★
■ LIFESPAN:	★★★★
■ ORIGINALITY:	★★★

■ OVERALL: *Blazing Dragons* is a fun change of pace and comes highly recommended to those after a game that's a bit odd.

8
OUT OF TEN

Bedlam

PUBLISHER:	Mirage
RELEASE:	Out now
PRICE:	\$99.95
GAME TYPE:	Action
PLAYERS:	One
MEMORY CARD:	Yes
CONTROLLER:	Mouse
CLASSIFICATION:	M15



Better known for its first person shoot 'em ups like *Duke Nukem 3D*, GT Interactive has produced a manic mechanoid slaughter-fest like no other in the form of *Bedlam*. Taking a fixed isometric perspective similar to *Syndicate* or *Soviet Strike*, *Bedlam* puts you in command of up to three RATs (Remote Assault Tanks), each armed with a small arsenal of lethal glove box attachments. There are thirty different weapons, shields and sensors to choose from, half of which have to be found on the various levels before you can make use of them. Energy zappers, flame throwers, gatling guns, multiple grenade types and much, much more lie waiting to whet your violent appetite.

The story is that the Biomex (genetically engineered slaves of future human society) have revolted and are threatening all that is warm and cuddly here on Earth. "Death to the fleshy ones!" they proclaim through their voice synthesisers before commencing their conquest. Naturally, it's up to you to stop them by sabotaging their war effort at every step. This involves all manner of offensive behaviour from the straight out slaughter of enemy troops to the destruction of whole buildings and fortified compounds. There is a total of twenty five levels to blast through before the people of the world can sleep comfortably again, safe in the knowledge that next time they order the nearest Biomex to scrub the gussets of their long-johns it won't rip their heads off and stuff it up their butts.

While it all sounds quite good on paper, there is unfortunately a big problem with *Bedlam* on the PlayStation. It was originally designed to be played on a PC with a mouse, and no matter how sharp you are with the joypad you'll eventually reach a point where you just can't keep pace with the hectic action - *Bedlam* isn't called that for nothing! It gets pretty frantic at times, with so much lead, energy and grenades flying around everywhere, and the poor old PlayStation joypad just wasn't designed for this sort of gameplay, it's a bit like trying to feed the chooks with a pair of boxing gloves on. This is a shame as *Bedlam* is fine game on the PC, but unless you're fortunate to have a PlayStation mouse, the game is basically rendered useless in this format.

■ GRAPHICS:	★★★
■ SOUND:	★★★
■ GAMEPLAY:	★★★
■ LIFESPAN:	★★
■ ORIGINALITY:	★★★

■ OVERALL: Originally a good game, *Bedlam* suffers horribly in the conversion to a joypad controller. PlayStation mouse - where are you?

6
OUT OF TEN

Casper

PUBLISHER:	Interplay
RELEASE:	Available Now
PRICE:	\$99.95
GAME TYPE:	Exploration
PLAYERS:	One
MEMORY CARD:	Necessary
CONTROLLER:	Joypad
CLASSIFICATION:	G



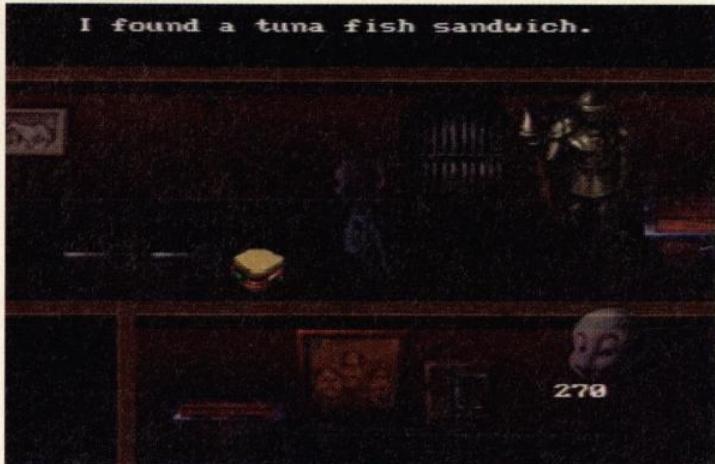
Let us start by saying that *Casper* is obviously aimed at a very young audience, being based on the recent Hollywood film, so if you gave it a miss you may as well do the same with the game.

On the other hand, fans of *Casper* will have a good time piloting him through the sumptuous graphics of this game. A nice touch is the ability to inspect everything there is to see, even if it serves little purpose other than that of decoration. Likewise, the sound throughout the game is also fairly impressive and adds to the overall experience, mainly due to its excellent Danny Elfman style music, and the overall production level of this game really starts to look like its Hollywood counterpart.

The control over Casper works fairly well, but the rest of the gameplay is fairly stiff and repetitive, it seems like you're just going through the same rooms over and over again doing the same tasks and using the same skills that you learnt in the previous sections. The fact that there is no map makes it even more gruelling to drag your spiritual carcass around the house, although it is possible to speed up the action considerably with a sneaky keypad combination. What can't be fixed is the alarming frequency at which the game pauses when Casper ventures into a section of the house which hasn't been loaded into the memory, an inexcusable slackness in programming in this day and age!

The most annoying problem, however, is that unless you have a memory card there is no way of saving a game. That's right, no passwords.

While *Casper* might be a good example for younger players to come to terms with the concept of puzzle/adventure games, seasoned players may find it hard to get through to the end of the game - not because it's difficult, but due to the aimlessness and lack of challenge. In the end it's just too much like a Hollywood movie: slick production, loads of money involved and absolutely zero substance. *Casper* will be enjoyed by the younger player who is content to wander around exploring empty rooms with little pressure put upon them to do much other than looking at everything, but if you like to be stimulated by the games you play, you'd best look elsewhere.



- GRAPHICS: ★★★
- SOUND: ★★★
- GAMEPLAY: ★★
- LIFESPAN: ★★
- ORIGINALITY: ★★

■ OVERALL: Don't get the wrong impression, *Casper* isn't a really bad game, it's just that it's not very good. Recommended only for the very young or very dim.

5
OUT OF TEN

Panzer General

PUBLISHER:	Mindscape
RELEASE:	Out now
PRICE:	\$79.95
GAME TYPE:	Strategy
PLAYERS:	1 or 2
MEMORY CARD:	Ja
CONTROLLER:	Joypad
CLASSIFICATION:	G8+



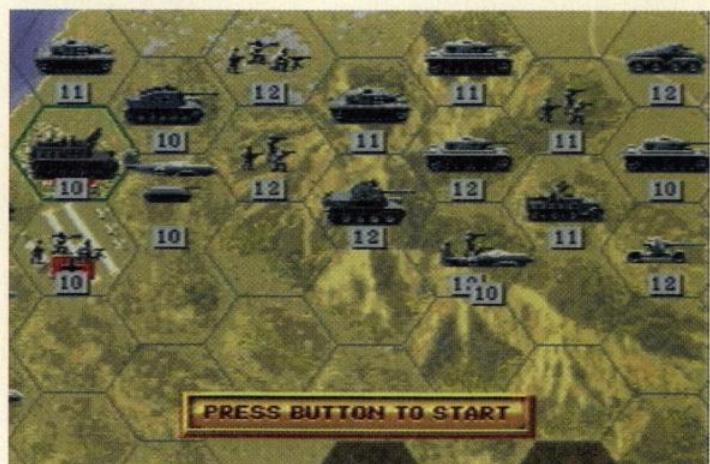
Woah, hard core strategy on a console system? Why not? SSI's *Panzer General* is one of the most easily accessible and enjoyable hex based strategy games ever made, and actually turns out to be a perfect choice for the PlayStation.

Panzer General is a simulation of armoured warfare during World War II, concentrating on the exploits of the Axis powers, but also playable from the Allies' point of view. You can wage a single battle from the war or an entire campaign, and the theatres of operation include Africa, Russia and Western Europe, hopefully leading your troops on to glorious victory after victory.

The essential difference between a strategy game like this and, say, *Command & Conquer* is that the action takes place in turns, as opposed to real-time action. Further involvement is brought about by your units having a detailed set of attributes which make them behave as much like the real thing as possible in battle. There are troop morale factors to think about, a chain of command and thorough indirect fire rules for artillery and armour. Additionally, your units will gain experience and skill as they fight and if you wish to build up a strong army, it's important not to let them get obliterated in battle. This means keeping reserves ready close to the front and using them wisely when they're needed. All of these things help to convey a far greater depth than real-time strategy games for the simple reason that real-time games have to move along quickly, with no time for such detail.

Panzer General's interface is simple and easy to deal with and although the original version was written with a mouse in mind, the joypad works without a problem and you have total control over your troops and equipment.

On the PC, *Panzer General* was a great game and the only negative aspect it attracts is that strategy games with this level of involvement aren't exactly what most PlayStation owners are used to. It's definitely the sort of game for mature players who can afford to spend the time required to really get into it, but once you do there's a wealth of depth to keep you going for ages. If you're after a challenge that involves a lot more thought than reflexes, you could do a lot worse than this!



- GRAPHICS: ★
- SOUND: ★★
- GAMEPLAY: ★★★
- LIFESPAN: ★★★★
- ORIGINALITY: ★★★★

■ OVERALL: *Panzer General* won't be widely popular because it doesn't involve shooting or punching everything in sight, but that may be just what you're after.

7
OUT OF TEN



Hours of fun
for the whole family
(Except the cat.)



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PLAY TEST HEAD TO HEAD 2D FIGHTING

Two dimensional beat 'em ups are fast becoming a dying breed in the face of competition from the graphically impressive 3D fighting games, but some say the old school ways are still the best. We ▷

PUBLISHER:	Capcom
DISTRIBUTOR:	Virgin
RELEASE:	Now
CLASSIFICATION:	G8

Darkstalkers



Spandex clad super babes in action - now that's the sort of game we like to see!

PUBLISHER:	Takara
DISTRIBUTOR:	Sony
RELEASE:	TBA
CLASSIFICATION:	TBA

Samurai Shodown 3



We loved *Samurai Shodown* in the arcades, but this version is unacceptable by today's standard.



In the wake of *Street Fighter II* a plethora of competent titles emerged that, while quite playable, didn't really offer any innovations for the fighting genre. But *Samurai Shodown* changed all that. With its use of weapons for combat coupled with the dynamic zooming that developers SNK were famous for, the fight's took on an even more ferocious intensity. With its cast of charismatic warriors and beasts from the olden days of Japan, some have said that the game surpassed even *SFII*! The second sequel is finally here for the PlayStation but, unfortunately, the faithful have been let down - this is a very poor conversion indeed.

The zooming effect is hardly as

game and make it more than just *Street Fighter* with freaks.

Like Capcom's classic *Street Fighter* series, with which *Darkstalkers* shares the same game engine, there's enough tactics and special moves to keep one engrossed in the game beyond the visual humour. As with many of the recent beat 'em ups there's a special meter at the bottom of the screen that charges up enabling your character to execute a massive attack that can KO an opponent in a spectacular manner. While the graphics, sound and sprites in *Darkstalkers* are well done, they do pale in comparison to *SFA2*'s splendour. Still, the deviation from the norm in the characters is what gives *Darkstalkers* its unique appeal.

Darkstalkers

■ GRAPHICS:	★★★	■ OVERALL:	7
■ SOUND:	★★★		
■ GAMEPLAY:	★★★★		
■ LIFESPAN:	★★★		
■ ORIGINALITY:	★★		

OUT OF TEN

smooth as its arcade counterpart, but that's just scratching the surface! In comparison with the rest of the competition on

offer, the speed of the game is hideously slow and there is no option to raise the intensity - a shocking oversight in our books. The animation quality itself is shoddy beyond belief, to the point that chunks of frames seem to be missing - the results certainly aren't smooth! The quality of the graphics also leave a lot to be desired, the colour palette and the sharpness of the sprites and backgrounds are nowhere near as vibrant or crisp compared to *Darkstalkers* or, needless

to say, *SFA2*! Even if you loved playing this at the arcades (or on the 16-bit systems, for that matter), steer clear away of this version. Save yourself from the disappointment... and the waste of cash.

Samurai Shodown 3

■ GRAPHICS:	★★★	■ OVERALL:	5
■ SOUND:	★★		
■ GAMEPLAY:	★★		
■ LIFESPAN:	★		
■ ORIGINALITY:	★		

OUT OF TEN

▷locked Amos in his room for two weeks solid with four classic arcade games converted to the PlayStation. His response? "Let me out, I gotta take a whizz!"

Street Fighter Alpha 2



The game that started the beat 'em up band wagon rolling is still the best. *Street Fighter II* rules!

Yes, the all-time classic fighting game returns! In terms of play mechanics, there's been no major revolutionary enhancement over the previous versions, but boasting new backgrounds and a whopping 18 fighters including the new kid on the block, Sakura,

as well as Capcom characters from past versions of *Street Fighter* and *Final Fight*, this latest incarnation of the popular series is undoubtedly the best yet. The graphics are just superb with vibrant colours, large sprites and an overall sharp image, in fact you probably won't see a better looking 2D fighter outside of the arcades!

The fights are frantically intense and the super attacks you unleash at full power flatten opponents in a most satisfying manner! The new custom combos that you make up during these moments by chaining together simple attacks, plus the other tactics like counters and various combos are

what gives the *SF* games their long-term appeal. It's an easy game to pick up and get into, but players wishing to delve deeper can happily take their time to learn all the intricacies of the characters' art of fighting.

SFII has always been the definitive beat 'em up and this latest version reaffirms its status. As they say, the original is always the best, and it just got better!



PUBLISHER:	Capcom
DISTRIBUTOR:	Virgin
RELEASE:	December
CLASSIFICATION:	M15+

Street Fighter Alpha 2

■ GRAPHICS:	★★★★	■ OVERALL:	9
■ SOUND:	★★★★		
■ GAMEPLAY:	★★★★★		
■ LIFESPAN:	★★★★		
■ ORIGINALITY:	★		OUT OF TEN

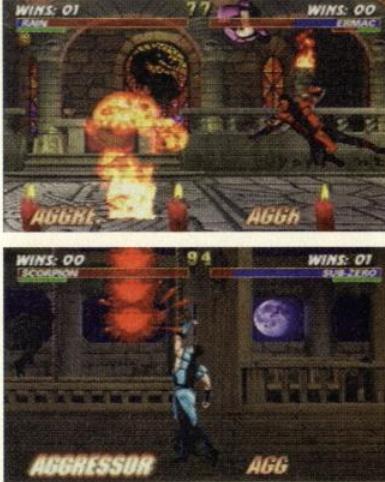
Mortal Kombat Trilogy

Ahh... *Mortal Kombat*, the black sheep of the beat 'em up family. Whenever video games are picked upon by the tabloid press as being socially destructive and immoral, you can bet that either *Doom* or *Mortal Kombat* will be called upon to illustrate how nasty games can be. *MK* is an obvious target, though, as there really isn't much else to the game other than beating your opponent senseless then ripping them in half, but that is exactly why it's so popular.

MK Trilogy is basically all three versions of the game rolled into one with all the characters from all the games available for players to select from the start - over 30 in total, including the bosses and hidden fighters. The basic interface is carried over from *MK3*, with all the stuff like the run meter, combo percentages and kombat kodes included. However, *MK Trilogy* isn't just a compilation of the past titles, it does

include new moves and brutalities for most of the characters. One new feature that is exclusive to *Trilogy* is the Aggressor mode. Each time you land a hit, part of the word AGGRESSOR appears at the bottom of the screen and if you manage to spell it out your character is blessed with super fast speed and can inflict double damage for several seconds. The only other difference of note is the increased speed and smoothness at which the game runs.

MK fanatics will be in Outworld Heaven when they get their hands on *Trilogy* and if you're dedicated enough you'll probably find a reason to buy it even if you've already got *MK3*. However, there are those who will see this latest excess of gore as little more than an exercise in flogging a dead horse. And then ripping its head off.



PUBLISHER:	Williams/Midway
DISTRIBUTOR:	Sony
RELEASE:	Now
CLASSIFICATION:	MA15



■ GRAPHICS:	★★	■ OVERALL:	6
■ SOUND:	★★★		OUT OF TEN
■ GAMEPLAY:	★		
■ LIFESPAN:	★★★		
■ ORIGINALITY:	★		

There's little more to *MK* than frantic button bashing until the blood flows. That's why kids love it.



More gore than your mother will stand for! Finish him!

PLAY TEST HEAD TO HEAD HOCKEY

When it comes to hockey sims there are more than you can puck a stick at, but generally speaking there isn't much to separate one hockey game from another. Hockey freak Nick Smith▷

PUBLISHER:	Electronic Arts
RELEASE:	Out now
PLAYERS:	1 - 4
MEMORY CARD:	Yes
CONTROLLER:	Joypad
CLASSIFICATION:	G

NHL '97



NHL 97 is bound to be the most eagerly anticipated hockey game release, for its publisher, Electronic Arts, has a well respected track record with past hockey games on many other formats.

EA has established itself a leader in realistic sport simulations and *NHL '97* offers nothing less than this. The vast array of options available are well presented in a manner that makes it easy to select what you want. Expert commentary is provided by an EA sports specialist before and during the game.

This game has the most intuitive controls, virtually identical to EA's previous EA Hockey releases, although there has been much subtle tweaking of the game mechanics here and there. The animation isn't quite as polished as



As you'd expect, the latest NHL game from Electronic Arts is pretty damn good.

that in *Face Off* or *Powerplay*, with the players looking a little bit blocky from some angles, however the rest of the graphics are excellent.

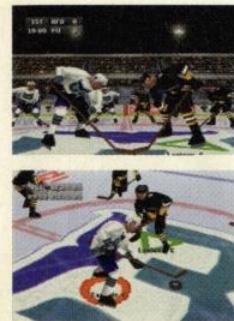
With EA's *NHL '97* you've got a pretty good idea of what you're getting, a slick looking and comprehensive representation of the sport. And isn't that what you want?

NHL '97

■ GRAPHICS:	★★★★	■ OVERALL:
■ SOUND:	★★★★	
■ GAMEPLAY:	★★★★	
■ LIFESPAN:	★★★★	
■ ORIGINALITY:	★★★	

8

OUT OF TEN



NHL Face Off



The graphics look blocky and the challenge is a bit easy, but *NHL Face Off* is still quite a good game.

Sony's in-house entry into the hockey stakes is the ageing *NHL Face Off*. It offers 26 teams from the NHL with over 650 players, each of which has their attributes and skill based on their actual statistics.

There are four views to choose between, ranging from an overhead view to a really strange close-up behind the action that can be hard to follow. The players in *NHL Face Off* are smaller than the other hockey sims, but are still surprisingly well animated for their size. The attention to detail is such that many motions are realistically replicated, such as hip checks, shoulder checks and cross checks.

You won't have too much trouble scoring yourself, and that's the only real flaw to this game. *NHL Face Off* is a competent hockey game that will provide just as much excitement in multi-player mode as any of the others.

NHL FACE OFF

■ GRAPHICS:	★★★	■ OVERALL:
■ SOUND:	★★★	
■ GAMEPLAY:	★★★	
■ LIFESPAN:	★★★	
■ ORIGINALITY:	★★★	

6

OUT OF TEN

►compares three 'proper' hockey sims and, for those after a change, one totally unrealistic arcade-style game.

NHL Powerplay '96



Virgin's NHL Powerplay '96 is just as good as NHL '97 and makes a nice change if you've already got one of EA's games.

Virgin's first foray onto the hockey rink is a good, solid game. *NHL Powerplay '96* is a detailed simulation which gives you a full control over the offensive and defensive plays, making it one of the most realistic hockey games around. All the NHL teams are available with statistics as they were during the '95-'96 season.

NHL Powerplay '96

■ GRAPHICS:	★★★★	■ OVERALL:	8
■ SOUND:	★★★		
■ GAMEPLAY:	★★★★		
■ LIFESPAN:	★★★		
■ ORIGINALITY:	★		

OUT OF TEN

There are lots of options including pre-season, play-offs and a tournament mode that includes international teams from across the globe.

The gameplay is very smooth, although the controls feel a little stiff and may seem a little unnatural at first, though you'll soon get used to them. It looks very slick and either a fixed view on the ice or a free roaming camera is available, giving the game an open feel.

The artificial intelligence of the computer opponents is quite good and there's no cheap way to easily score goals at the expense of the goal keeper.

Powerplay Hockey is a very polished game with just about

everything you could want in an ice hockey game. If you want a change from the continuous cavalcade of yearly upgrades to EA's splendid title, *Powerplay* is the best place to look.



PUBLISHER:	Virgin
RELEASE:	Early '97
PLAYERS:	1 - 4
MEMORY CARD:	Yes
CONTROLLER:	Joypad
CLASSIFICATION:	G



NHL Open Ice

In the tradition of *NBA Jam* comes the ice hockey equivalent from Midway. *Open Ice* is a fast paced, high scoring two-on-two hockey game. Separating itself from normal hockey games, *Open Ice* instead takes a whole new perspective and focuses on speed and action above team strategy. Viewed from a side-on angle, the similarities with *NBA Jam* are more than apparent, with digitised hockey players from NHL, power-ups, and special moves, etc.

NHL Open Ice is, for all intents and purposes, a perfect arcade conversion. It has all the features and options with the style of play that made *NBA Jam* such a success, and is packed with loads of hidden characters and power ups to make the players faster or shoot more accurately. The 'On-fire' mode is back, too, achieved by shooting three consecutive goals.

Open Ice

■ GRAPHICS:	★★★★	■ OVERALL:	7
■ SOUND:	★★★		
■ GAMEPLAY:	★★★★		
■ LIFESPAN:	★★★		
■ ORIGINALITY:	★★★		

OUT OF TEN

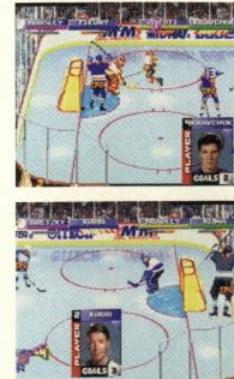
Open Ice can't really be compared directly with the other 'conventional' hockey games as the style of gameplay is quite different. It offers fast, instant action and works most effectively as a

multi-player game, as playing against the computer just isn't as much fun. Anyone looking for a fast, less serious hockey game should be more than happy with this offering.



NBA Jam on ice is a fair description of *NHL Open Ice*. It's not a proper hockey sim, but it's quite good fun.

PUBLISHER:	Midway
RELEASE:	December
PLAYERS:	1 - 4
MEMORY CARD:	Yes
CONTROLLER:	Joypad
CLASSIFICATION:	G

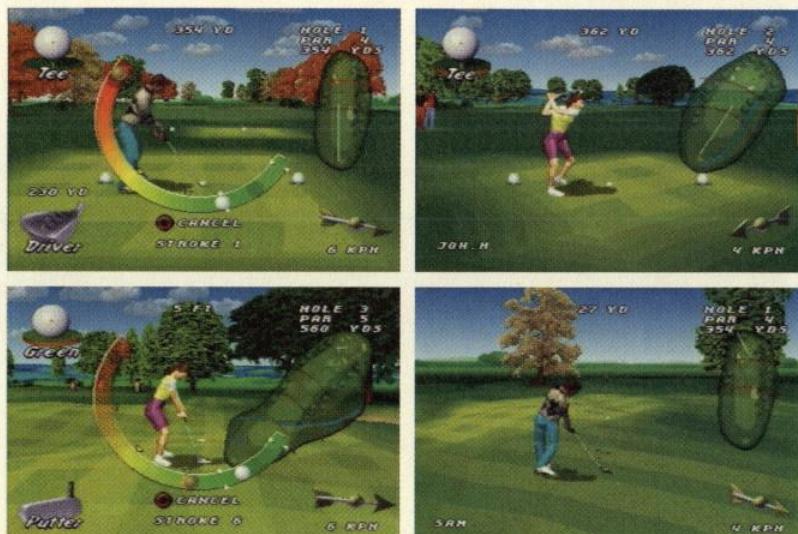


PLAY TEST HEAD TO HEAD GOLF

We all know that in the great scheme of world sport, golf is not the most scintillating of entrants. Middle-aged blokes walking around prime real estate reserved solely for the use of those in the ▶

PUBLISHER:	Core
RELEASE:	Now
PLAYERS:	1 - 4
CLASSIFICATION:	G

Virtual Golf



Hmm... Purple lycra out on the green? I think not! Shoddy graphics and poor control spoil *Virtual Golf*.



Excuse me if I've missed the point, but aren't the super consoles supposed to herald the era of greater realism? If so, why has Core given us a game chock full of poorly drawn cartoon characters? And why,

when we can now have full in-game commentary, are we saddled with sporadic, inane interjections from a bloke who sounds alarmingly like the old Major from Fawlty Towers?

The most disturbing question,

however, is why is this game so easy? Sure, not everyone is an absolute genius at golf games, but even those who spend the greater part of their waking hours surgically affixed to their PlayStation shouldn't find a new game quite as easy as *Virtual Golf*. Yes, it's got all the options - four courses, heaps of players and choice of tournament, practise, skins and some bizarre hoax called "The Derby Scramble". However, options are taken as given these days and this game falls down badly in the graphics, sound and gameplay departments. And when these necessary aspects are not up to scratch, there's not a whole lot else to talk about. Look elsewhere.

Virtual Golf

■ GRAPHICS:	★★	■ OVERALL:	5
■ SOUND:	★★		
■ GAMEPLAY:	★★		
■ LIFESPAN:	★		
■ ORIGINALITY:	★		

OUT OF TEN

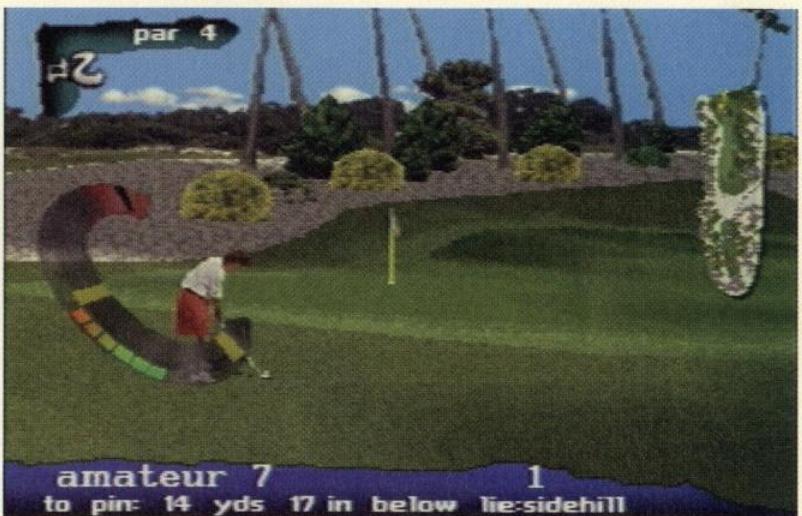
PUBLISHER:	EA Sports
RELEASE:	Now
PLAYERS:	1 - 4
CLASSIFICATION:	G

PGA Tour '97



EA has a reputation for making the best sports games around and its previous Megadrive and Super NES golf titles were without peer. So what's happened here?

Most of the necessary elements for an excellent golf game are in this game - it looks good and appears reasonably realistic, the courses (Sawgrass and Spanish Bay) are meticulously plotted and it comes with EA's usual dizzying array of options. Sure, the commentary is pretty lame, but that's a relatively new part of sports games and we're prepared to forgive it to an extent. In fact, this would be a very good game but for one element - for some reason it's painfully slow. The game takes an age to load at the start and an age to load between holes. Worst of all, the players take an eternity to make their stroke after you



You get a fancy swing meter with lots of flashing colours, but then you have to wait ages to hit the ball.



have hit the controls. While the delays are measured in seconds rather than minutes, they do add up and tend to occur at the most inopportune times. What should be a lot of fun becomes a rather frustrating experience and those who buy this game on the strength of the EA logo alone may well be disappointed.

PGA TOUR '97

■ GRAPHICS:	★★★	■ OVERALL:	6
■ SOUND:	★★		
■ GAMEPLAY:	★★★		
■ LIFESPAN:	★★		
■ ORIGINALITY:	★★		

OUT OF TEN

►upper tax bracket is hardly the stuff of schoolboy dreams. Stretch Armstrong dons the chequered trousers and heads off down the fairway. In a motorised golf cart, of course.

Actua Golf

Head to Head

John McEnroe may well have had a point when he said that a sport in which you never get out of a walk is not really a sport. Golf made its start in the world of computers with all the delicious secret charm of a Playboy mag in a kids treehouse. Subversively installed on countless work computers, many players' first introduction to sports sims was a sly round with the Golden Bear when they should have been working on a no doubt fascinating spreadsheet. The games have become increasingly sophisticated on PC and 16-bitters and now we've got the first decent batch for the PlayStation. But are they decent?

Back in the 16-bit arena there was a long held the view that golf games couldn't get much better. Real courses, real players, the ability to track your own scores over time and options ahoy meant that the rudimentary games of earlier days became fully equipped world tours. But with the move to 32-bit all these basics were, we thought, expected and the increased hardware power could be put towards improving the presentation for total visual immersion. Perhaps, we hoped, golf games could get even better? Sadly, as evident in some of these titles, they haven't progressed very far.

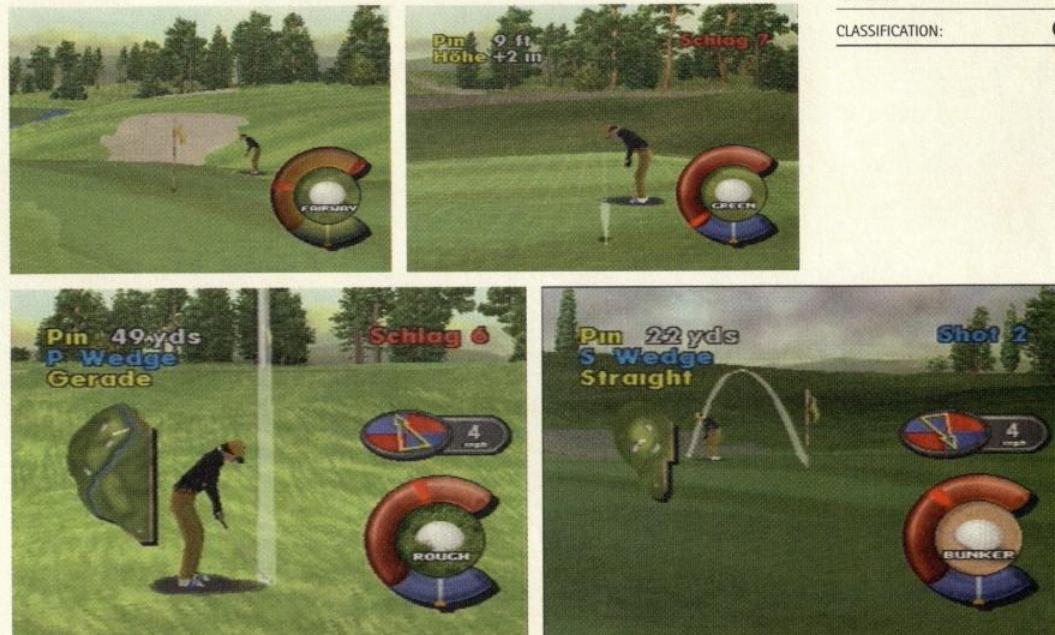
We held high hopes for EA's latest yearly update of its popular *PGA Tour* series, but while it's technically a good golf game, the lengthy setup and loading times can really drive you nuts! It is better than *Virtual Golf* by a long shot, but no matter what other charms this game has, you will spend most of your playing time sitting around wondering whether there's something better you could be doing - like playing *Actua Golf*. While it's far from perfect, *Actua Golf* is well presented and enjoyable enough to play, it's definitely the pick of this bunch. But unless you're already into golf games, you may not see the point in playing them.

ACTUA GOLF

■ GRAPHICS:	★★★★	■ OVERALL:	
■ SOUND:	★★★★		
■ GAMEPLAY:	★★★★		
■ LIFESPAN:	★★★★		
■ ORIGINALITY:	★★★		

8
OUT OF TEN

PUBLISHER:	Gremlin
RELEASE:	Now
PLAYERS:	1 - 4
CLASSIFICATION:	G



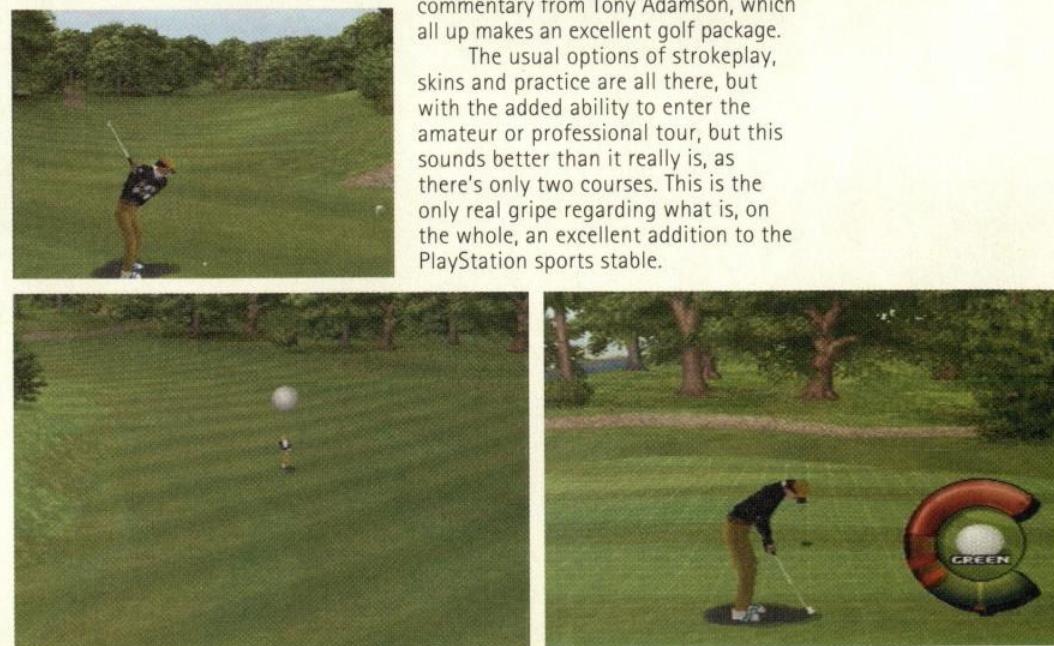
"Ja, das ist ein schlag!" *Actua Golf* lets you play in sausage-eater language. And Euro gibberish, too.

If you are looking elsewhere, *Actua Golf* is probably the place to head. While the limitations imposed by the sport may not leave too many places for golf games to go, *Actua Golf* is an example of how to nail a game for the 32-bit format. It takes all the strengths that the best 16-bit games had and enhances them - with excellent graphics and great commentary.

The push for sports games of all

sorts is now towards the full USA television-style experience and *Actua Golf* makes a very good fist of the task. The graphics are generally excellent, though a bit sketchy on the players at times, but the courses look very good and appear uncannily real at times. Add to this the multi-view shot tracking on each stroke - you will often see the ball screaming toward you in bird's eye view - and the varied and often funny commentary from Tony Adamson, which all up makes an excellent golf package.

The usual options of strokeplay, skins and practice are all there, but with the added ability to enter the amateur or professional tour, but this sounds better than it really is, as there's only two courses. This is the only real gripe regarding what is, on the whole, an excellent addition to the PlayStation sports stable.



Multiple camera angles are a specialty of *Actua Golf*. Ball-cam (left) and putt-cam (right).

PLAY TEST HEAD TO HEAD GRIDIRON

Big sweaty men running around in tight shiny pants slapping each other on the bottom while yelling out "Hutt Hutt!" a lot. Adrian Bertram nervously ventures forth onto the astro turf.

PUBLISHER:	EA Sports
RELEASE:	Out now
PLAYERS:	1 - 4
MEMORY CARD:	Yes
CONTROLLER:	Joypad
CLASSIFICATION:	G

Madden '97

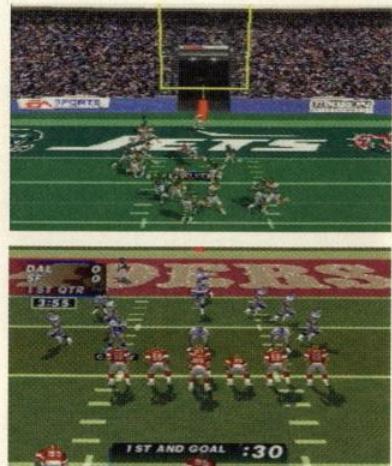
When the original *John Madden Football* was released on the Megadrive it was one of the first attempts at an authentic simulation of gridiron. Whilst it was a quite enjoyable game, it did have some problems such as the delay between plays and the fairly limited extent of the player control. Subsequently there has been a yearly procession of sequels on just about every format and this latest PlayStation incarnation is the most polished yet.

From the moment you start this game up you notice how it tries to capture the spirit of American football with its over the top production values and TV sports show approach. Setting up the game itself can take quite a while and involves sitting through a few monotonous loading screens, but there is now an enormous number of options to select from including the different modes of play (exhibition, season and tournament), a roster of over 100 teams (including all current teams as well as historic superbowl teams), a huge list of stadiums and enough extras and minor rule options to keep even the most pedantic fan happy. It even includes

many recent rule changes to the game such as two point conversion plays and, more importantly, the play clock. This forces the choice of play within a limited time, so the game progresses quickly without lengthy delays.

The graphics are essentially the same style as past games but the fluidity of the players' motion has been greatly improved and as a result you have a better idea of where the players are and what they're doing. Likewise, the sound quality is much better and grunts, groans and crowd noises all add to the overall atmosphere.

Once you get started you'll find *Madden '97* plays extremely well. The controls are essentially the same as the previous games and fairly easy to learn, but the huge number of play options ensures that the gameplay remains fresh. The plays are far more realistic and varied than on previous versions, finally distancing itself from the basic pass/run/kick options of most gridiron games. It's not a vast improvement over the past games, but more of a substantial upgrade and as such holds together quite solidly.



Madden '97 is more of the same. That's good.

Madden '97

■ GRAPHICS:	★★★	■ OVERALL:	7
■ SOUND:	★★★★		
■ GAMEPLAY:	★★★★		
■ LIFESPAN:	★★★★		
■ ORIGINALITY:	★		

OFTEN TEN



NFL Gameday

NFL Gameday has been available for over a year now, so it's not surprising that it gives the impression of being a slick 16-bit title rather than a 32-bit game. Developed at a time when PlayStation developers were still coming to grips with the hardware, the major problem is that it doesn't try to take advantage of the

technology. The graphics are actually not too bad, with good player detail and nicely presented menu screens, but once you start playing you notice the cumbersome and jerky manner in which the players move. Compounding the problem is the difficulty in controlling the players, and after a while you notice that



NFL Gameday is a decent game, but it just isn't quite as slick as *Madden '97*.

Head to Head

With Sony's ageing *NFL Gameday* severely lacking in the graphics and gameplay department, EA's *Madden '97* would appear to be the obvious choice for diehard fans. However, there is one other gridiron game on the way which could well offer serious competition. It's *NFL Quarterback Club '97* from Acclaim which, while we've yet to put the finished game to the test, promises substantial improvements over the previous version. Could be good.

all the plays seem to have pretty much the same result. And, adding to these woes, is that there's very little information on screen concerning the current drive.

Persistent players may eventually gain some satisfaction from playing the game, but there's very little in it which hasn't been done more thoroughly in *Madden*.

NFL Gameday

■ GRAPHICS:	★★★	■ OVERALL:	5
■ SOUND:	★★		
■ GAMEPLAY:	★★★		
■ LIFESPAN:	★★★		
■ ORIGINALITY:	★		

OFTEN TEN



Ready, set, Gex.

GEX

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G

PLAY TEST HEAD TO HEAD TENNIS

Didn't we just compare a couple of tennis games last issue? Yes, but now two more have arrived and it's fallen upon Nick Smith to see how they compare to the last lot.

PUBLISHER:	Namco
RELEASE:	Dec
PLAYERS:	1 - 4
MEMORY CARD:	Not needed
CONTROLLER:	Joypad
CLASSIFICATION:	G

Namco Smash Court Tennis

Instead of realistic tennis players, *Namco's Smash Court Tennis* opts for the cutesy manga style of graphics that the Japanese are renowned for. The big question is, how does this transfer into a tennis game?

As you can tell by the graphics, Namco have set out to make a light hearted attempt at the game of tennis, and in the end deliver a product that will be well received by younger game players, but falls short of expectations in terms of what's already available. The characters are small, polygon built critters with nice animation, while the locations and courts

are bright and colourful and there are many kitsch options to choose from.

The game falls short in that it's just too frustrating. Judging where the ball is going to land is one of the most difficult aspects of the game, and the small size of the characters makes this an even harder task.

Smash Court presents you with three of the standard options that are typical of tennis sims. There is the Exhibition mode, which allows you to play in a single match and Club Mode which is actually a tournament, whilst the final option is for game settings,



Namco's Smash Court Tennis is a solid game but a little on the slow side. And the cutesy graphics may or may not appeal to you.

allowing you to tweak in game options to your preference. Interestingly enough, you can win prizes depending on who the sponsor of the tournament is. These prizes, such as landscaping and buildings can be placed on your very own court!

In the end, even if you are sure that the manga style graphics appeal to you and this is the game you want, just remember that cutesy wears thin after you've served three doublefaults in a row!



Namco Smash Hit Tennis

■ GRAPHICS:	★★★	■ OVERALL:	6
■ SOUND:	★★		
■ GAMEPLAY:	★★★		
■ LIFESPAN:	★★		
■ ORIGINALITY:	★★★		

OUT OF TEN

PUBLISHER:	Telstar
RELEASE:	Out now
PLAYERS:	1 - 4
MEMORY CARD:	Not needed
CONTROLLER:	Joypad
CLASSIFICATION:	G

Davis Cup Tennis

Davis Cup Tennis is based on the annual event of the same name. In stark contrast to *Smash Tennis*, *Davis Cup* opts to have its characters a lot more realistic, in fact they are actually digitally rotoscoped people to give them an almost real look!

Match options available in *Davis Cup* are virtually identical to *Smash Court*, with the exception of Quick Start mode. This feature is a much welcome

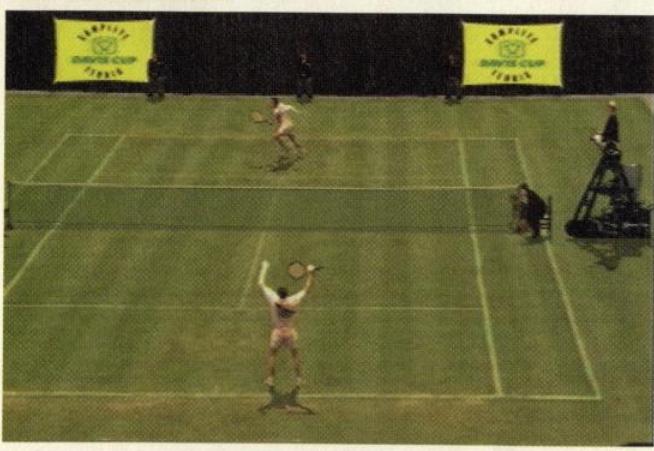
addition, as it automatically chooses the players and locations for the match so that you can play a match virtually straight away, without going through the game selection processes.

What places *Davis Cup* ahead of *Smash Tennis* is the gameplay, which this time is much more forgiving. Ball positioning is easier to place, and therefore make the mechanics of serving and placing shots a much easier task.

The animation is smooth and fast, and the players moves are very well animated. As for sound, there is the standard audience gasp and applaud, as well as the obligatory larrikin in the audience yelling "Come on!".

You can select the country you would like to play in, by revolving a picture of the world, my main gripe is that you can't play in Australia! At least this was possible in *Smash Court*. OK, it may not be majorly important, but it will affect the appeal for Australian tennis fans.

Overall *Davis Cup* is a competent tennis sim that has nice, smooth animation and easy to master controls that will have broad appeal - if you want a tennis game that is a little on the more serious side, take a look.



It's fast and looks great, but Davis Cup cuts the cheese rather than the mustard.

Head to Head

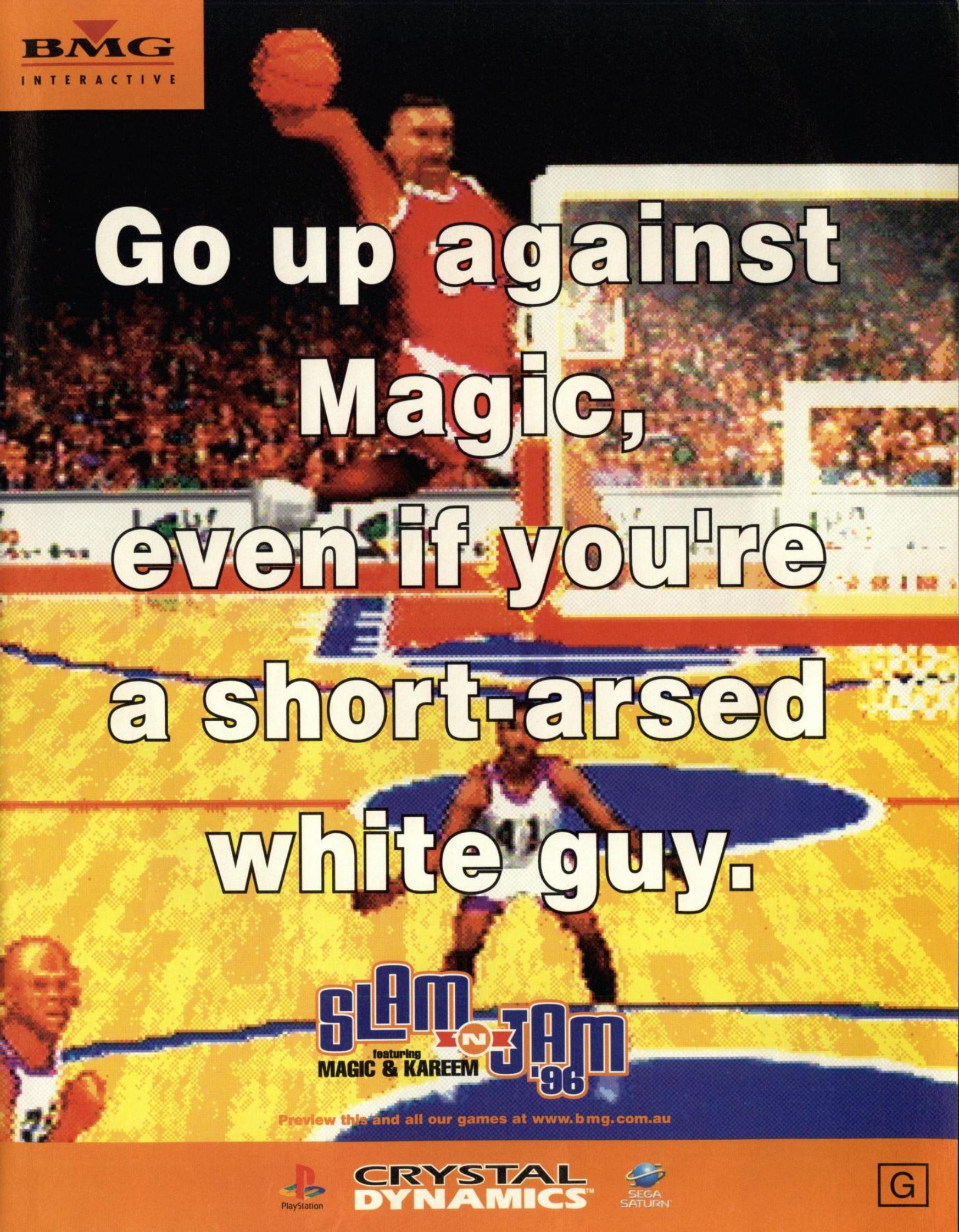
So, from the four tennis sims available, which one aces the others? It would still have to be *Pete Sampras Extreme Tennis*. Even though the mechanics of all four games are similar (there's only so much you can do with a tennis game), *Extreme Tennis* successfully captures the essence of the game without being bogged down with too many gimmicky options and awkward controls.

Namco Smash Court Tennis is probably the next best game, but it is painfully slow at times and full of freaky little characters. *Davis Cup* looks slick and fast, but isn't much of a game. Take your pick.

Davis Cup Tennis

■ GRAPHICS:	★★★	■ OVERALL:	6
■ SOUND:	★★		
■ GAMEPLAY:	★★★		
■ LIFESPAN:	★★★		
■ ORIGINALITY:	★★		

OUT OF TEN



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5	Star Gladiator
6	Resident Evil
7	Darkstalkers
8	Chunlvers!!!



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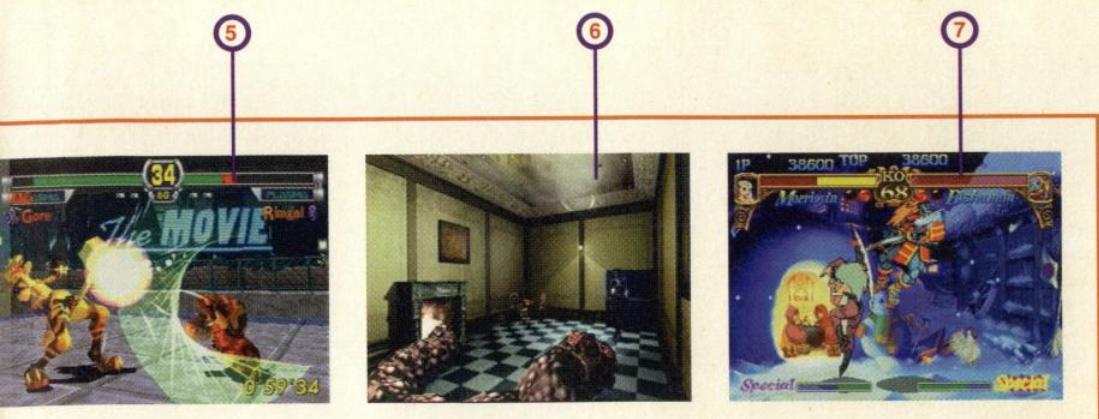
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CAPCOM IS BEST KNOWN FOR IT'S LEGENDARY BEAT 'EM UP STREET FIGHTER II, CAPCOM HAS BEEN MAKING VIDEO GAMES FOR YEARS AND YEARS. AMOS WONG TAKES A LOOK AT THE COMPANY'S HISTORY AND THE CURRENT STATE OF AFFAIRS WITH REGARDS TO STREET FIGHTER.



Capcom Co. Ltd. has been manufacturing and distributing electronic game machines since 1979. The Japanese software house's greatest contribution to the games industry was the revolutionary fighting game genre with their release of *Street Fighter 2*. With its diverse cast of easily identifiable fighters from around the globe, deadly special moves and a surprising depth of gameplay, the software house had an instant hit on its hands. Even today, one can easily see how other fighting titles are still indebted to this classic, particularly in their character designs. Ryu, the solemn Japanese fighter; Ken the tough guy in red from America; and Chun-Li, the lithe female warrior from China have all been imitated in dozens of other fighting games.

Today the company consists of over one thousand employees, 600 of whom are split into ten research and development groups working independently of each other. Despite producing several other excellent games of varying styles like *Megaman* (*Rockman* in his home country), *UN Squadron* (Area 88, based on the hit manga) and *Ghouls 'n' Ghosts*, fighting games are Capcom's mainstay and currently remain the company's specialty.

When asked about the direction video games are taking and how they may change over the next couple of years, the reply was: "Fighting games will still remain strong, unless we provide a new genre to the public..." That new genre refers to their smash hit 'survival horror' experience, *Resident Evil*, developed exclusively for the PlayStation. Although similar games have been available for other platforms, Capcom's zombiefest ushered in an unprecedented level of detail and terror previously not experienced by game players. Not surprisingly, a handful of similar titles have been produced by others in its wake, as was the case with the masses of *Street Fighter* clones.

Capcom representative Mr Tad Yamaguchi answers some of our questions and sheds light on the company's recent developments.

PlayStation Magazine: You recently produced *Star Gladiator*, the company's first 3D fighting game. Do you think there is still life in 2D fighting games, or will they eventually be replaced by 3D versions?

Capcom: Yes, we do think 2D games still have a chance, however in order to compete with 3D games we must embody new elements to appeal to players, as well as improving the quality of the graphics. This is the reason why we've had to create our new arcade board system called CPS 3.

PSM: We're starting to see pictures on the internet of two new *Street Fighter* games, can you tell us about them?

Capcom: The two games are *Street Fighter 3* and *Street Fighter EX*. *SF 3* is a two dimensional fighting game along the lines of the existing *SFII* series, while *SF EX* is a 3D game with 2D backgrounds. Since the previous *Street Fighter* series were two dimensional, it was impossible to display every single pattern of movement at all angles, so we have created *SF EX* as a model for reference to study from in order to make the animation of the 2D game closer to 3D movement.

PSM: So in effect you are using advanced technology to refine and improve upon existing methods of game production. Very interesting. There has been a close link between the anime/manga style and the character designs of your 2D games. Will you be keeping this style in your 3D games like *SF EX*?

Capcom: We didn't try to retain this style for *SF EX*, however that's not to say that it isn't possible.

PSM: Why did you choose to make a *Street Fighter* game featuring the American comic X-Men?

Capcom: The main reason we chose Marvel characters was because they have a style very similar to the *Street Fighter* characters.

PSM: The *Street Fighter* animated movie has been a success, are you planning further anime titles based on your other games?

Capcom: We might in the future, however it's unlikely for *Resident Evil*.

PSM: What process does a game go through from its conception to its release?

Capcom: We research the demand of the market as well as using the feedback from consumers as reference material to study. The research and development term will usually take about 18 months.

PSM: Do you use character designers from the anime industry for your games, or are they created by in-house staff?

Capcom: We create all original characters within Capcom's R&D.

PSM: How long does it take to create the character designs and fighting moves for the games?

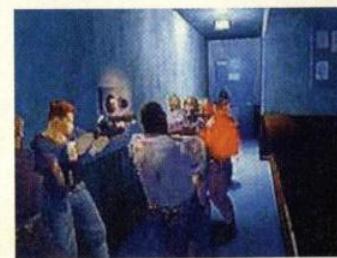
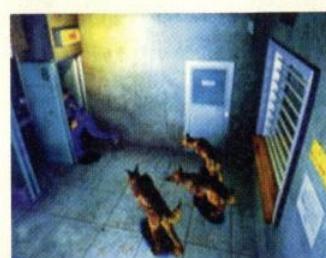
Capcom: In order to complete the movement of one character it will take between six months and a year.

PSM: *Resident Evil* is possibly one of the scariest games we've played, how is the sequel progressing and what can we expect?

Capcom: We can't tell you anything about the storyline, however there will be two characters. Eliza is a university student who rides a motorcycle, and Leon is a policeman who works for the Racoon Police Department. When you see the finished game you will notice that the movement of the characters has become much more life-like.

PSM: And finally, what new titles can we look forward to on the PlayStation?

Capcom: As well as *Resident Evil 2*, there's *Megaman 8*, *Marvel Super Heroes*, *Breath Of Fire 3*, *Megaman Battle & Chase* and *Super Puzzle Fighter 2 Turbo*.



CAPCOM'S BID TO REGAIN THE ACTION ADVENTURE TITLE FROM TOMB RAIDER? RESIDENT EVIL 2 IS DUE IN MID '97.

Porsche Challenge

PUBLISHER: Sony	CATEGORY: Driving
RELEASE: March	PLAYERS: 1 - 2

One of the most desirable sports cars of today is about to become accessible to anyone who owns a PlayStation. Put aside that couple of hundred grand you were saving for a new Porsche, the game will be available very soon and we've already had the



chance to take it for a quick test drive.

Under an exclusive deal with the German manufacturer of quality automobiles, Sony has acquired the rights to make a driving game devoted solely to the new Porsche Boxster.

The graphics are some of the most realistic we've ever seen and the Porsche cars really do look like the real things. The detail goes to such extremes that even the dashboard instruments and stereo are visible. The reflective sheen of the paint job sparkles in the sunlight and then dims as the car travels through a section of the track that's in shadow.

There is a total of 25 tracks spread over five courses, including the legendary Stuttgart circuit where Porsche tests its vehicles. Road conditions in the game mimic real situations, such as off-camber bends and loose gravel shoulders, and the cars behave realistically on these surfaces.

The developers have been at pains to make sure the cars have the same handling dynamics as the real ones and this has to be taken into consideration when driving. Trying to burn around like you can in *Ridge Racer* will result in poor performance and the feel of the game is more akin to *The Need For Speed* or the arcade mode in *Formula*



1. But while *Porsche Challenge* aims to be a realistic driving simulation, it's still quite possible to have loads of fun sliding the back out on fast corners.

Produced by Sony Computer Entertainment Europe's internal development team which brought you *Total NBA*, *Porsche Challenge* is due to be released here and abroad in March and you can bet we'll be featuring it heavily in our next issue.



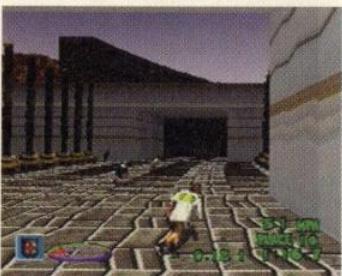
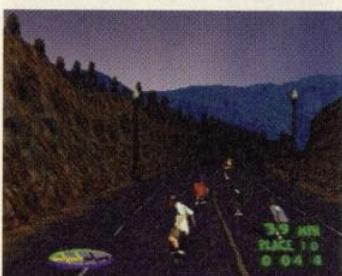
2Xtreme

PUBLISHER: Sony	CATEGORY: Racing
RELEASE: February	PLAYERS: 1 - 2

2Xtreme is the sequel to *Xtreme Games*, the brutal sport where street punks and gnarly dudes race against each other on public roads. Innocent bystanders beware, these ruffians care little for public safety and their only concern is winning, whatever the cost. There's plenty of extreme kicking and punching to be had between competitors on the desperate dash to the finish line.

There are now four extreme sports to take part in, skateboarding, snow boarding, mountain biking and roller blading. Unlike the first game, however, the races are confined to one particular extreme mode of transport. After all, snow boards aren't exactly suited to being ridden on bitumen.

The races take place on extremely long, winding courses that seem to go for ages before you reach the end, much in the same style of *Road Rash*. *2Xtreme* also features a split screen two-player mode so you and a buddy can go head to head, though there's no guarantee that you'll be buddies at the end of the race! Due out extremely shortly, *2Xtreme* looks like it will be well received by fans of the original.



King's Field

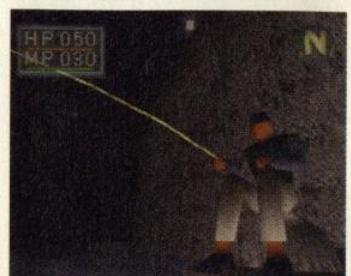
PUBLISHER: Sony	CATEGORY: RPG
RELEASE: February	PLAYERS: One

Despite being the most popular sort of game in Japan, there's always been an unsettling absence of role playing games in Western markets. Apparently, at least according to marketing executives, Western audiences aren't interested in thinking games. Strange, that is, for we get not an inconsiderable number of letters asking when any good RPGs are coming to our shores. Fortunately the tide appears to be turning and a number of decent RPGs are at last on the way. First up is *King's Field*, which is actually called *King's Field 2* in Japan.

A mysterious island called Melanat is the setting for this adventure. Legends tell of a strange blue light descending upon the island centuries ago and ever since people have been terrified to go near it, fearing that the rumours of a monstrous beast inhabiting it might be true.

The interface is a first person perspective and you can walk around wherever you want, and combat takes place in real time with a selection of hand held weapons. There's the usual assortment of RPG mainstays like heaps of characters to talk to and

magic spells galore and the plot seems to offer a fair level of intrigue. After repeatedly being slain by such seemingly inoffensive creatures as dragonflies and giant snails, we did become somewhat deterred, but persistence is usually required to get into these sort of games and between now and the next issue we'll be making a thorough effort to get the better of those troublesome snails.



Soul Blade

PUBLISHER: Namco CATEGORY: 3D Fighting
RELEASE: March PLAYERS: 1 - 2

Tekken 2 is currently the most popular 3D beat 'em up on the PlayStation, but its status is about to be challenged by *Soul Blade*, Namco's latest arcade hit.

Known as *Soul Edge* on the street, the PlayStation edition has had its name changed (due to legal reasons, no doubt) to *Soul Blade* and features a number of additional extras not seen in the arcade game. The PlayStation game is a conversion of the *Soul Edge* version II upgrade and also has the usual console bits and pieces such as the team battle mode, a versus mode and a survival mode in which your energy bar is not refilled after each bout.

Soul Blade's most striking



attribute is the spectacular weapons with which the fighters hack each other to pieces. A weapon gauge appears below the energy bar and depletes whenever you guard against an attack. When you lose all of your weapon's power, it is flung from your hands and you've only got your fists and feet to fight with, so aggressive fighting is actively encouraged if you want to gain the upper hand.

There are ten characters taking part in the tournament, each skilled in the usage of a different type of weapon (or two). Weapon attacks take two main forms, vertical attacks and horizontal attacks, and each fighter also has a kick. Combinations of the four attack buttons bring about a variety of slashes aimed at different parts of the opponents body, upper, middle and lower.

Avoiding getting hit is obviously the most important factor of any fighting game, and *Soul Edge* introduces a unique pivot avoidance technique that allows you to effectively counter-attack, using your opponent's movements to your own advantage.

Soul Edge is currently online for an Australian release around March and we'll have an in-depth Play Test next issue.



Final Fantasy VII

PUBLISHER: Square Soft CATEGORY: RPG
RELEASE: April PLAYERS: TBA

RPGs are big business in Japan and the biggest in the business is, without a doubt, Square Soft. Each new instalment of its *Final Fantasy* series sells literally millions of copies and it hasn't been uncommon for fans to camp outside their favourite game shop overnight to make sure they don't miss out on a copy!

The previous *Final Fantasy* games have been exclusive to Nintendo and everybody was expecting the next game to come out on the N64, however Square and Nintendo had a falling out and *Final Fantasy VII* will be appearing only on the PlayStation.

The game is a classic style RPG in that the battles are turn based and you have to select which of the three characters in your party attacks and what they're attacking. This sounds complicated, but it offers a greater scope to customise your attacking strategies and use your magic powers to full potential.

Final Fantasy VII has been in development for quite some time and the preview disk that was distributed in Japan provided a

tantalising taste of what's to come. Judging from the number of enquires we've received about this game it will be very popular and an English language translation is currently in the works.



Bushido Blade

PUBLISHER: Square Soft CATEGORY: Martial arts
RELEASE: TBA PLAYERS: 1 - 2

There are plenty of one-on-one fighting games around but none of them are at all realistic. *Bushido Blade* will challenge your concept of what a fighting game should be like, with its open stages giving you complete freedom to devise your own fighting style and tactics.

There are six fighters and you have a choice of eight traditional Japanese weapons to carry into battle. Unlike other games where the fights take place strictly on a single axis, *Bushido Blade* lets you run around anywhere in the stage you want to, be it behind walls and pillars, up and down stairs and even on and under bridges.

The actual fighting is very realistic, most of the action is parrying and blocking, with only a single killing stroke needed to dispatch your enemy. This may sound boring, but in practice makes the game a lot more tense as you can't allow yourself to take any hits.

Bushido Blade is due out in Japan in March, but we're still awaiting news of a PAL version. Hopefully some good news next issue.



Jet Rider

PUBLISHER: Sony USA CATEGORY: Racing
RELEASE: March PLAYERS: 1 - 2

Racing games are one of the most popular categories on the PlayStation and there are plenty of top quality titles to choose from. *Formula 1* has the realistic driving game market sewn up and *Wipeout 2097* holds sway in the futuristic racing league department, so there's not really much original subject matter left for racing games.

Enter *Jet Rider*, the uninspiring title of a game previously known under the much cooler name of *Jet Moto*. The vehicles you race are jet powered hover bikes that zoom across all terrain at high speed. In fact they're probably best described as like the speeder bikes from *Return of the Jedi*.

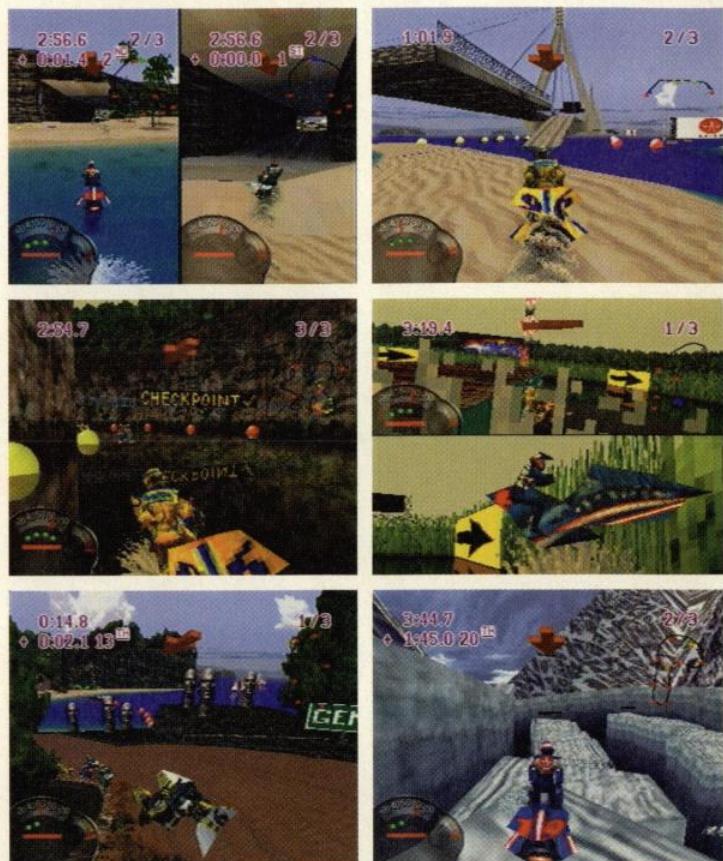
The races in *Jet Rider* take place over an unusual variety of courses. One race takes place on and around an island resort with the riders being forced to negotiate sand dunes, surf, tunnels and even crumbling sections of freeway sticking out of the sea! Such creativity extends to the ice stages, rather than racing on a snow-covered and slightly slippery version

of the other tracks, here the jet riders have to bounce along over huge angled blocks of ice with no barriers and bottomless chasms awaiting those who run too wide.

However, the most exciting feature in our opinion has to be the suicide courses. These are unlike any of the other track designs in that they aren't looping circuits, but single stretches of track where the riders dash from one end to the other between two U-turn check points. This results in mass confusion and carnage as the leading riders swing back head-on into the remainder of the pack!

The game includes a welcome two-player split screen game which alternates between vertical and horizontal splits depending on the selected track. This gives you a good look ahead on the long narrow tracks and a wide peripheral view for the twisting ones with multiple routes.

Jet Rider offers a nice change in style from most other racing games and there's a surprising amount of depth and finesse to the control you have, as well as heaps of different riders with varying levels of attributes such as inertia, lift, responsiveness and so forth.



Disruptor

PUBLISHER: Interplay CATEGORY: Shooter
RELEASE: December PLAYERS: One

Disruptor is a first person perspective shooter along the lines of *Doom*, however that's where the similarity ends.

While the emphasis in *Doom* is on the 'run around killing stuff as quickly as you can' side of things, *Disruptor* offers a more thoughtful challenge. Don't expect to have heaps of mindless baddies lining up to be shot, although there's still plenty of that. Rather, you come up against strategically placed enemies that require a bit of planning to get around.

There's plenty of variety between the levels, both in terms of structural design and graphics, with some quite convincing effects. In one of the early stages you find yourself out in the middle of a desolate landscape of crumbling ruins and toxic pools of acid while an all pervading shroud of yellow fog hangs heavily in the air. This adds significantly to the overall atmosphere which helps to immerse the player in the game's environment.

Disruptor also tries to

distinguish itself from other similar games with the introduction of ... (drum roll, please) ... a plot! This isn't just a simple case of "you're the last soldier left between salvation and damnation", but a continuing storyline presented as a slick full motion video full of dodgy actors. This mightn't add much to the blasting side of things, but it's a cool diversion nonetheless.



Burning Road

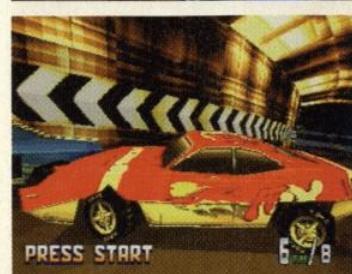
PUBLISHER: FunSoft CATEGORY: Driving
RELEASE: December PLAYERS: 1 - 2 link-up

Here's another driving game that'll be vying for your attention this summer. Described in the press release as "taking the best features from the likes of *Daytona* and *Sega Rally*" - not an entirely bad thing, we must admit - *Burning Road* is a fast paced racing game that offers instant thrills and excitement.

There's only three courses to play on, but there is actually a lot more variety than first seems evident. While the beginner course is a fairly simple oval circuit, the intermediate and expert courses take the player on a wild ride through an amazing number of conditions. One second you're speeding through a narrow tunnel, the next you're out in the rain sliding all over the place.

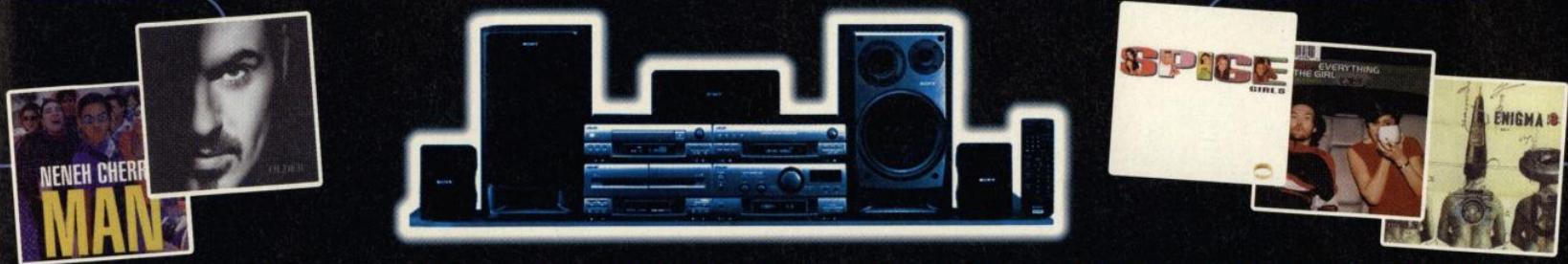
A selection of souped-up cars are on offer, each with different characteristics that affect the speed and handling of each. The vehicles also sustain damage if you hit the walls too much but it won't put you out of the race, it just makes the steering a bit more difficult to control.

Burning Road is available now and is an excellent choice if you're



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- Virgin Paraphernalia

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- 1 White Label PC CD-Rom game.
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Hexen

PUBLISHER: GT/id/Raven CATEGORY: 1st Person
RELEASE: March PLAYERS: One



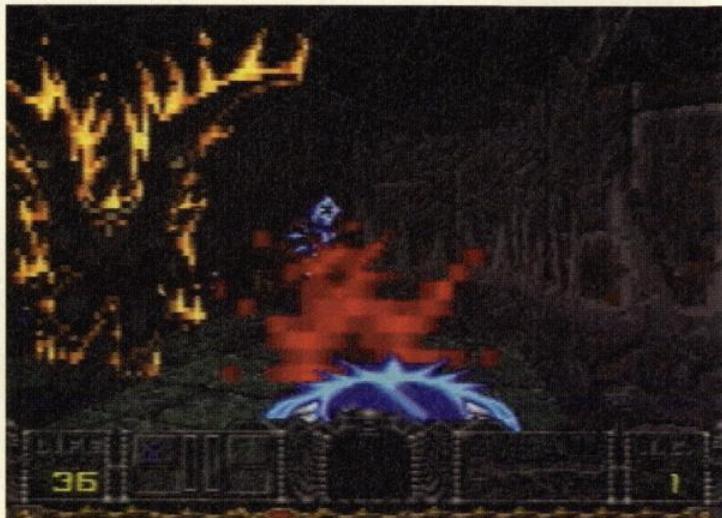
Hexen is a Doom-style shooting game set in a wizards and warriors-style environment, with the player having the choice of selecting either a mage, cleric or fighter as their character. Instead of a shotgun and BFG, you run around toasting your foes with crossbows, enchanted weapons and magic spells.

The similarity with Doom goes further than initial appearances, for the actual game engine of Doom (what makes those rooms spin around so nicely and all) has been acquired for exclusive use by Raven Software. Hexen does feature a number of improvements over Doom, however, and you are now able to look up and down, as well as being able to fly when you have attained the ability.

The design throughout the levels is more structured than the haphazard layout of Doom's, and to triumph often requires a lot more thinking than simply running around looking for switches. An interesting feature is that the main sections all branch off a central level and actions in one area will often cause effects elsewhere. This attempt to bring a plot to the Doom genre is a welcome change and gives players the perception of being immersed in the Hexen world, rather than just slugging

it out through level after level.

Despite being overshadowed by its bigger brother, Hexen went down a storm on the PC and there's no reason why it won't be just as popular on the PlayStation. In fact in some people's opinion, Hexen is a better designed single player game than Doom and, as the majority of PlayStation owners fail to take advantage of the link-up feature (although it should be pointed out that Hexen does), this could well be a strong point in the game's favour.



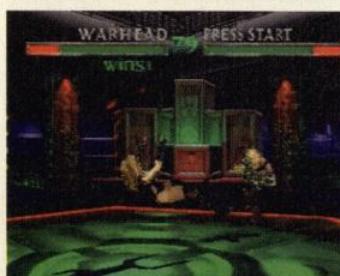
War Gods

PUBLISHER: GT/Midway CATEGORY: Fighting
RELEASE: February PLAYERS: 1 - 2

The latest brain battering beat 'em up from the arcades is about to hit the PlayStation with a very solid whack indeed. War Gods is published by Midway, the company responsible for the Mortal Kombat series, so it's not surprising that the two games share a number of similarities. A motley crew of fighters with silly names and costumes are at your disposal and outlandish finishing moves are available for the victor to further humiliate the vanquished.

While the basic fighting is of the usual punch/jump/kick/special move variety, War Gods allows the digitised fighters to move around the circular fighting arenas in a pseudo-3D way, sort of like Star Gladiator. This adds a much needed extra dimension to the well-worn style and the quick speed of the action helps make this one of the more frantic button bashing-fests around.

The coin-op edition has performed quite well in the arcades, but whether the PlayStation version of War Gods has enough going for it in order to compete with the likes of Toba and Tekken remains to be seen.



Area 51

PUBLISHER: GT/Williams CATEGORY: Arcade
RELEASE: February PLAYERS: 1 - 2

There aren't many light-gun arcade-style shooting games available for the PlayStation, but Area 51 is just about to land. Set in America's notorious UFO sighting hot-spot of the same name, Area 51 puts you in the boots of an elite SWAT team member charged with cleaning out the military base that's become infected with scum sucking alien mutants.

Every crate and barrel seems to have half a dozen heavily armed ghouls lurking behind, waiting for you to step into view, whereupon they open fire or start hurling contaminated barrels of radioactive waste at you. Area 51 also features a number of moving sequences in which you ride shotgun on a jeep through the infested compounds. Here you have to react quickly, with little time to line up the bad guy and even less time to aim for the power-ups hidden in destructible boxes.

If you're looking forward to Namco's Time Crisis, then Area 51 may keep you going for the time being, and it's also expected to support the forth-coming light gun.



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Acclaim



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Sentient

PUBLISHER: Psygnosis CATEGORY: Space RPG
RELEASE: February PLAYERS: One

Role playing games have come a long way since the days of text-based adventures, but replacing the worlds built up by the player's imagination with an artist's idea of what's supposed to be going on has met with varied degrees of success. *Sentient* goes boldly where no RPG has gone before with its real time first-person perspective interface that literally



drops the player in the middle of it all. One's first reaction when finding oneself in *Sentient*'s 3D environment is to say "Where's me shotgun!" Unfortunately, there ain't one. This is a



game of exploration and discovery, but don't let that put you off.

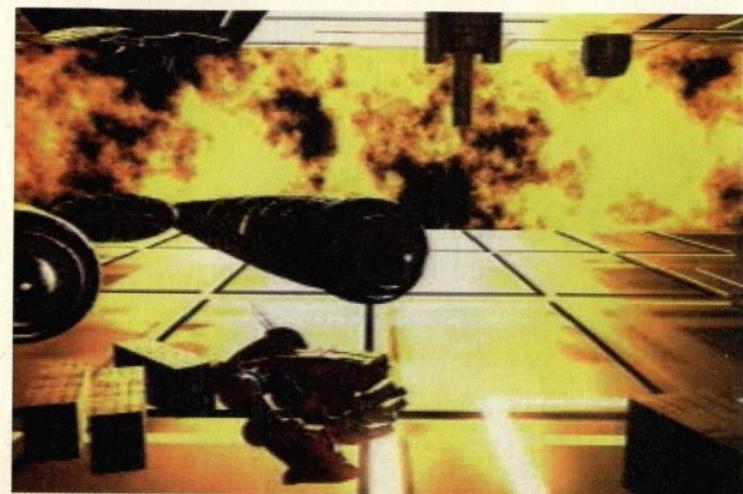
The player takes on the role of a medical officer sent to a mining station orbiting the sun, where an unusual outburst of solar flares has destabilised operations and caused a rash of radiation sickness amongst the crew (pun intended). But, wouldn't you know it, just as your space shuttle is about to land a massive flare sends out shock waves, causing your shuttle to crash in the docking bay. Apart from a badly injured engineer, you are the only survivor and your initial reactions determine your immediate fate. Do you look for a way out of the burning docking bay and run the risk of being nabbed by the security force, or should you brave an unhealthy sun tan as you stay and help the dying engineer? Either way, your actions determine how the rest of the crew of the mining station look upon you



thereby influencing your progress later in the game.

While saving everyone and getting to the bottom of the conspiracy is the ultimate objective of the game, the way you go about it determines which of the eight alternate endings you reach. There are a number of sub-plots concerning important characters on the station that you must unravel through the good old technique of Q&A, but there's nothing to stop you from stooping to blackmail or other devious means of getting what you want.

The feeling we got from our all too brief look at *Sentient* was akin to reading a really good science fiction novel, where you become thoroughly engrossed in the subject matter and all that's going on around you, while never knowing where the next turn will take you. It's the sort of game that will have you staying up late and hanging on for the next revelation.



Life Force Tenka

PUBLISHER: Psygnosis CATEGORY: Doom-style
RELEASE: March PLAYERS: One

The best thing about *Doom*, other than actually playing it, is that it's set the standard for first person shoot 'em ups to such a high level that any game attempting to follow in its footsteps has got to be pretty damn good just to get noticed. *Life Force Tenka* could be the guiding light which takes PlayStation shoot 'em ups out of the "not quite as good as the original PC version" doldrums.

Life Force Tenka has been developed solely for the PlayStation and it utilises many of the PlayStation's specialised graphics routines to create the spectacular visuals and effects such as huge transparent fireballs that blast down corridors after you.

While *Life Force Tenka* will be compared with *Doom*, the Tenka team have been at pains to avoid their game being looked upon as just another clone. Even though there's no plot to speak of, the layout designs are among the most elaborate we've seen and the dozen or so different levels, each broken into two to three stages, all appear quite different from each other, thus avoiding the feeling of repetition.



Monster Truck Rally

PUBLISHER: Psygnosis CATEGORY: Racing
RELEASE: February PLAYERS: One

It's been a while coming, but at last we can say that *Monster Truck Rally* is almost upon us. Previously referred to as *Thunder Truck Rally* - the title for the American market - this game has been developed for Psygnosis by Reflections, the company responsible for *Destruction Derby 2*.

Split into two distinct sections, endurance racing and stadium car smashing, *Monster Truck Rally* offers a lot more variety than most other driving games. It distinguished itself from norm by giving you unusual objectives other than simply trying to out-run the opposition over a series of repetitive laps.

The endurance game sees you and several other monster vehicles driving wildly across an open landscape in search of randomly scattered checkpoints. Navigation skills play an important part in this game as it's easy to get lost in the treacherous terrain filled with canyons, ridges and river crossings, plus you've got the other drivers to worry about!



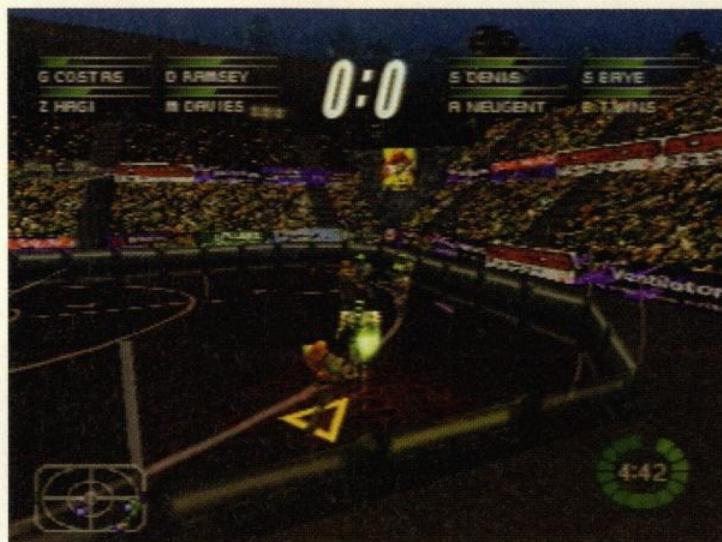
Riot

PUBLISHER: Psygnosis CATEGORY: Multiplayer
RELEASE: February PLAYERS: 1 - 8

"It's what the gamer wants!" screams the Riot press release in a bold 36 point typeface, but what exactly is that? According to the said press release, "sport simulation" and "beat 'em up action" are what gamers of today demand, and *Riot* combines them both in a multi-player extravaganza that is, you guessed it, a futuristic sport game.

While it's easy to be cynical about any game claiming to be the last word in brutal futuristic pay-per-view action, it is often these sorts of games that provide the most in terms of enjoyment and originality. Freed of the constraints and rules of real sports, the developers of *Riot* have opted for a bit of each from some of the most popular sport games around. Soccer, basketball and ice hockey have all influenced this game to some degree, but *Riot* manages to combine these elements along with many original ideas and the result promises to be an innovative and exciting game.

Up to eight players can participate in two teams of four-a-side, the object being to score more points than the other team. Sounds

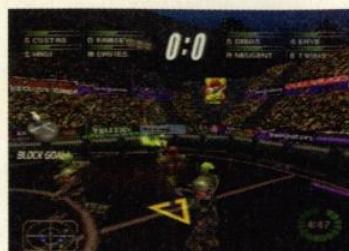


obvious enough, but *Riot* takes a slightly different approach to this than most other sport games. For starters, there is only one goal post and it's in the middle of a circular playing field.

Each team has a charging point at one end of the field and before you can score a goal you must take the ball to this point and charge it to your team's colour. If you score while it's charged to the colour of the

opposing team, they get the point(s) and after a goal is scored the ball reverts to neutral and it's a free-for-all brawl to regain possession. To make matters more interesting, spectators in the crowd throw in power-ups of varying effects.

The obligatory million-and-a-half camera angles are available and the team stats can be tampered with to suit your liking. The thing that most impressed us, however, is that the



game runs in the PlayStation's high resolution mode throughout, making for a very slick presentation.

The City Of Lost Children

PUBLISHER: Psygnosis CATEGORY: Adventure
RELEASE: March PLAYERS: One

Based on the French film of the same name, *The City Of Lost Children* is the story of two unlikely acquaintances; Miette, a ten year old girl and One, a strong man from a freak show. The pair unite to help each other attain a common goal, but for different reasons.

The star and controllable character of the game is, perhaps surprisingly, Miette. Despite her small stature and worldly naivety, this plucky young lady displays fearless bravery throughout her travels which culminate on an offshore oil rig that's home to a wicked old scientist. Dr Krank is his name and stealing children's dreams is his game, and One's little brother could well be his next victim if Miette doesn't get her act together in time.

The film was acclaimed for its stunning set design and intriguing story and the game follows closely on both counts, with an unprecedented level of support from the film's producers. It's an adventure game, in that you have to go around talking to people and finding things, and from the amount

of care and effort put into it by Psygnosis' French development team it promises to be just as wonderful as the film.



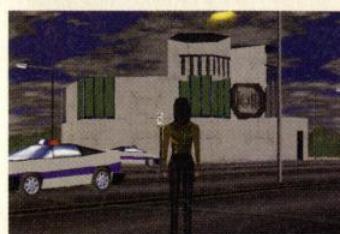
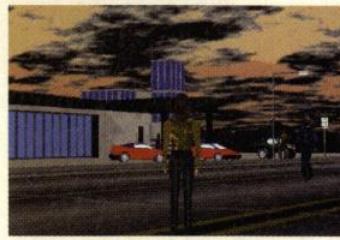
The Fallen

PUBLISHER: Psygnosis CATEGORY: Real-time RPG
RELEASE: March PLAYERS: One

For many players, the ultimate role playing game would provide a fully interactive 3D environment where your actions have consequences that are carried throughout the rest of the game. If that sounds like your sort of thing, prepare to start hanging out desperately for *The Fallen*.

Set in a post-apocalyptic society run by a megalomaniac who appears to have gotten the wrong message out of George Orwell's 1984, you take on the role of a person who's been excommunicated from the general population to become one of society's Fallen, hence the game's title. From this lowly position you have to get back into society and start uncovering the overall conspiracy and put a stop to it, unless, of course, you decide to continue it with yourself as the new overlord.

Progress is made by dealing with the many active characters inhabiting the game world. Everyone has a unique chain of attributes that affect how they interact with each other and the player.



Mechwarrior 2

PUBLISHER: Activision CATEGORY: Mech sim
RELEASE: February PLAYERS: One



Some people try to deal with their inadequacies through meditation, some with chocolate binges and a few even turn to religion, but we can think of no better way of coping with one's personal demons than suiting up in a 40-tonne refrigerator and going for a walk to the shops.

For those of you similarly inclined, the PlayStation probably hasn't provided quite what you're after and the old title *Krazy Ivan* was a bit of a disappointment. What you've really been waiting for is a conversion of *Mechwarrior 2* from the PC and, as luck would have it, the time is almost at hand for Activision's flagship to make its way onto the PlayStation.

Mechwarrior 2 puts you in the

hot seat of a heavily armoured mech unit, fighting on the side of one of two rival clans battling each other for galactic supremacy. You start out as a simple grunt assigned easy mopping-up operations and gradually, through trial by combat, work your way up through the ranks of your chosen clan to lead your own platoon of Mechwarriors on to glory.

There are a few changes to the PlayStation version which have been made to satisfy technical constraints, as well as a number of gameplay changes made in order to make the game more accessible as a console title. These include the addition of power-ups in the form of invincibility and stealth enhancements, as well as sixteen new levels designed for the PlayStation.

The graphics have been spunked up with nice textures added to the buildings and terrain as well as to the mechs themselves, and the game runs smoothly at a speed most PC owners would be jealous of.

The PlayStation is perfectly suited to this sort of 3D mayhem and *Mechwarrior 2* should come as a welcome relief to those of you looking for something that isn't full of cute kiddie characters or hormone enhanced fighting bitches from hell.



Micro Machines 3

PUBLISHER: Codemasters CATEGORY: Racing
RELEASE: March PLAYERS: 1 - 8

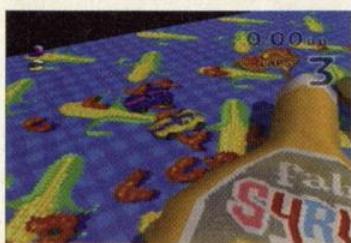
When it comes to silly car racing, *Micro Machines* reigns supreme. The first game came out on the NES console a number of years ago and despite being an unofficial release it soon became one of the most popular titles, much to Nintendo's consternation.

Micro Machines 3 is now on the way to the PlayStation complete with brand spanking new graphics brought to you in the form of rendered 3D. The original overhead viewpoint has been retained, but the camera now tilts and pans around to give a dramatic view of the race. The odd collection of household and back garden courses are 3D constructions that you can drive over or under. This gives the game a solid look and allows for more intricate design.

In terms of control, *Micro Machines 3* feels as sharp and responsive as the previous versions and is just as fun to play. It also includes a number of new features, such as special weapons that can be used to interfere with the competition.

Micro Machines has been

described as the pinnacle of competitive multi-player racing games and this latest version looks set to continue this tradition.



Bubsy 3D

PUBLISHER: Accolade CATEGORY: 3D platform
RELEASE: '97 PLAYERS: One

The graphics suit Bubsy's situation perfectly - he's stranded on a planet full of bizarre aliens that resemble mutated rejects from Sesame Street!

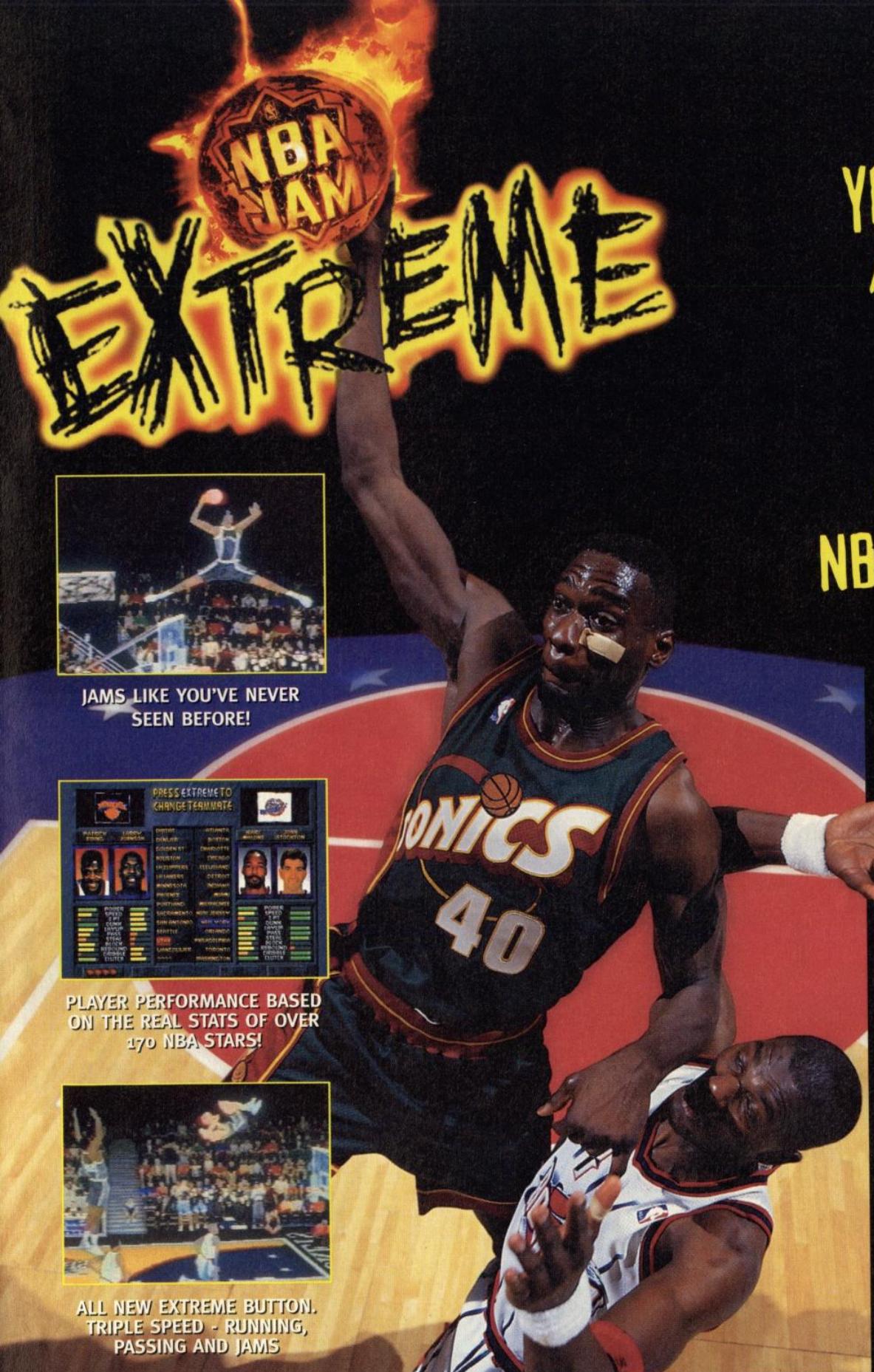


When *Bubsy The Bobcat* first burst onto the console scene back in the days when the Megadrive and SNES ruled supreme, he was greeted by some as 'yet another cutesy platform game mascot' and was subsequently ignored.

To be honest, the first *Bubsy* game deserved all the criticism that was heaped upon it for its lack of originality and tedious gameplay, however, *Bubsy 3D* promises to be more than just another platform game sequel. For starters it should be described as a proper 3D platform game, as opposed to being a platform game with 3D graphics. In fact *Bubsy 3D* has more in common with *Tomb Raider* than it does with *Crash Bandicoot*.

Bubsy finds himself in a series of open playing areas where he is free to wander and jump around to his heart's content. The player controlling *Bubsy* views the action following behind the bobcat's backside and there's plenty of platform-style puzzles and pitfalls to deal with, such as moving platforms and baddies to bounce on.

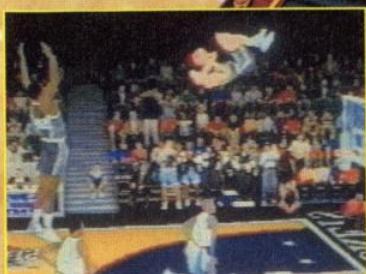
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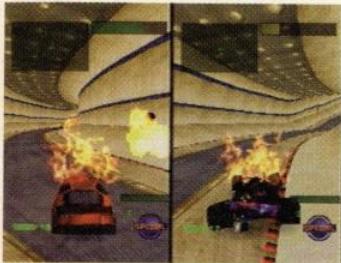
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Twisted Metal 2

PUBLISHER: Sony USA	CATEGORY: Smash 'em up
RELEASE: March	PLAYERS: 1 - 2

While the first *Twisted Metal* was quite a popular game, it must be said that it didn't really have much to it other than instant thrills in two-player mode. The sequel aims to provide not only more of the same, but also a bit extra to keep it in your PlayStation for longer.

The object of the *Twisted Metal* games is simply to drive around shooting and smashing into any opposition foolish enough to get in your way. There's a selection of wild and often wacky vehicles to choose from that out-do even those from the original. The new cars include a hearse, a front-end loader (that picks up other cars and smashes them as its special weapon) and,



most bizarre of all, a dude who stands in between two gigantic tyres with a couple of machine guns strapped to his shoulders!

Whereas the first *Twisted Metal* took place solely in *The City of Angles*, the sequel has its stages spread across the globe. There's the lava filled Amazonian circuit, chaotic down-town Hong Kong (complete with monorail tunnel through the buildings) and the confusing New York level with plenty of ramps and jumps, to name but a few.

Single-player games were a bit of a let down in the first game but you'll be pleased to hear that the opposition is now a lot tougher to dispatch. No longer can you hang back in safety, waiting for the others to wear each other down. Now you've got to be aware of cars sneaking up and getting a few cheap

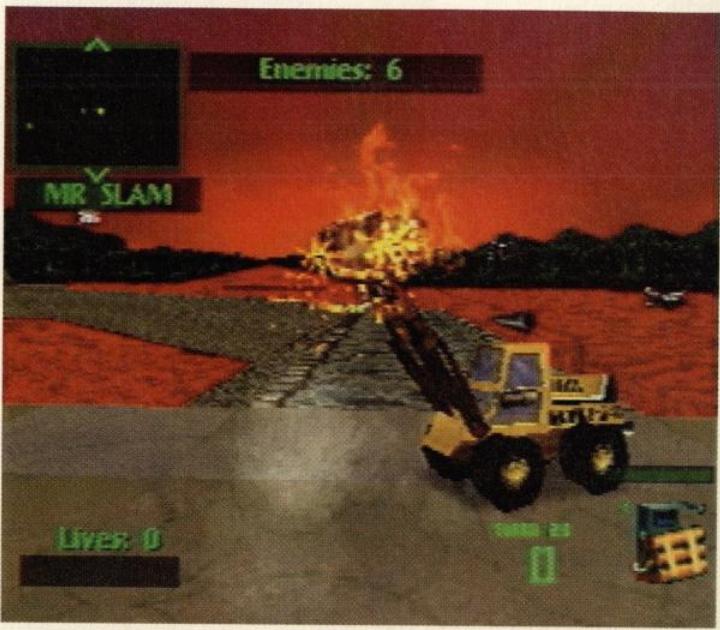


shots in while your back is turned.

Of course, two-player games offer the most excitement and there's nothing quite like sneaking up on your unsuspecting opponent and letting rip with a couple of missiles and a special weapon or two! Like its stable mate *Jet Rider*, *Twisted Metal 2* offers both vertical

and horizontal split screens depending on the stage.

It appears that almost all of the inadequacies of the first game have been addressed and *Twisted Metal 2* should provide plenty of hilarious moments when it's released early in the new year. Full review next issue.



Nascar Racing

PUBLISHER: Sierra	CATEGORY: Driving
RELEASE: January	PLAYERS: 1 - 2 link-up

With the exception of *Formula 1*, just about all driving games on the PlayStation have been a blend between realistic driving and outrageous over-the-top arcade-style action. *Nascar Racing* belongs in the same category as *F1*, in that it tries to simulate all the aspects of the real sport.

The game offers you two distinct modes of racing; arcade, for those who just want a quick race, and simulation which brings all sorts of realistic features into play. In the simulation races you have to take into account variables such as aerodynamic down forces, fuel weight and capacity and damage sustained from close encounters with concrete barriers.

Most Nascar races in America take place on oval circuits and this game offers all tracks and drivers from the 1996 season. Although oval circuits may appear to offer limited variety, there is a fair difference between them and you have the option to tailor your car specifically to each one. To do this you can choose to place additional weights on one side of the car, adjust the camber of the wheels and even specify the tyre

pressure. This level of involvement should make *Nascar Racing* appeal to driving enthusiasts as well as those after a solid racing game.



NBA Jam Extreme

PUBLISHER: Acclaim	CATEGORY: Basketball
RELEASE: December	PLAYERS: 1 - 4

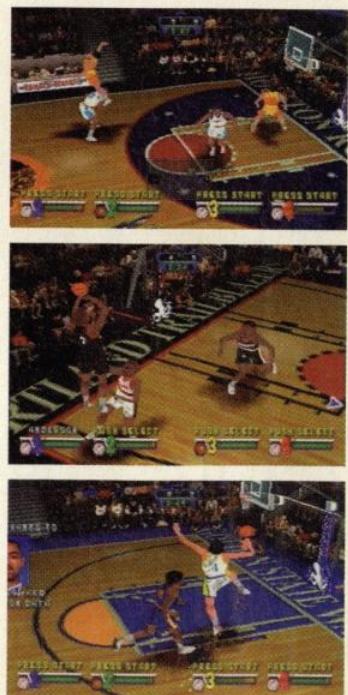
The world's most popular arcade sports game has entered the world of 3D and at last *NBA Jam Extreme* is available on the PlayStation.

The game uses a newly developed 3D engine that makes it appear similar to *Total NBA*. The players are solid polygon constructions which actually do resemble the real players when seen up close. Whereas the first *NBA Jam* viewed the game from a fixed perspective at the side of the court, in *Extreme* players have the option of multiple views from a floating camera. This zooms in for a close-up of the action for all those wicked slam dunks.

Of course it's the spectacular slam dunks that make *NBA Jam* what it is, and *Extreme* features even more of the outrages moves you know and love, as well as many more. Other new features include running commentary from Marv Albert (whoever he is), 12 categories of statistics, over 50 secret players and the new Extreme button which gives you special moves such as being able to push other players in mid-air. The animation of the players is smooth and quite impressive, thanks to Acclaim's much vaunted motion

capture technology which, for this game, featured Washington Bullets All-Star Juwan Howard.

NBA Jam Extreme is out now and should satisfy all die hard Jam freaks. Review next issue.



PC PowerPlay

THE AUSTRALIAN PC ENTERTAINMENT MAGAZINE

There is more to life than games.

Lots more. Like joysticks. And the internet, and of course that delicious and beautiful hardware inside - like CPUs (yes!), wave-table soundcards (yes Yes!) and video accelerators (ohmigod!).

Mmmmmm hardware. MMX Pentiums, DSVD modems and DVD CD ROMS. There are a few things to get excited about. Cheat codes and strategy guides are nice things too, and they aren't games. Not exactly. Surround Sound decoders for your PC are fun too, and they definitely aren't games.

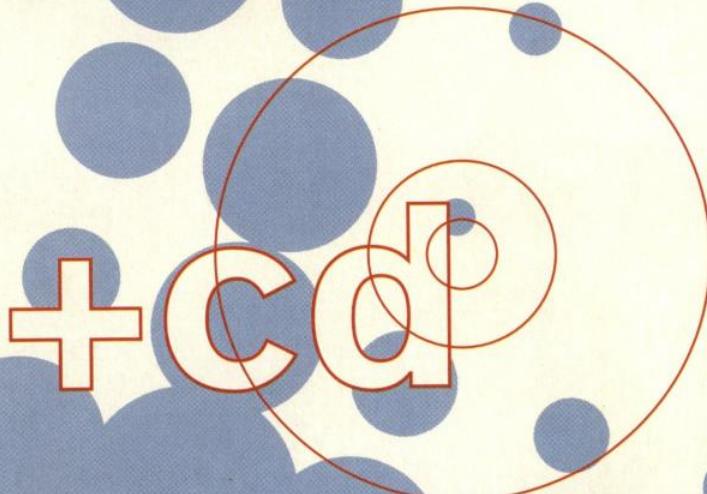
Then there are the people that make games, they're interesting too.

See, there's a lot out there that's worthy but isn't a game. You like these things and that is good. It makes you a broadminded individual.

You probably read PC PowerPlay then. It's got all this good stuff in it.

Plenty more too. Like games. Lots of games. A coverdisc full of games. Reviews of all new PC games. Previews of all upcoming games. It's mostly games, in fact.

Games. They're good.



FEEDBACK

We asked for your comments and opinions and, by golly, we got them by the sackful! Without exception our readers have been well chuffed with the first issue, but that hasn't stopped us making this one better. We're looking forward to your response and any further suggestions are more than welcome.

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WHADDAYA MEAN "ALMOST"?!

Congratulations on the prime mag ever. You have created an almost perfect mag. The only downer is you score out of 10. I think it would be better if it was out of 100.

1. I live in a fairly remote area and we get mags late, so I don't know when your first issue was released. How often does your magazine comes out?

2. When F1 Post Season comes out, will all the drivers be in the teams they were for the '96 or the '97 season?

Thanks for your time and space,

Your sincerely,
- Trewern Rowlands
Broken Hill, NSW

You want us to score out of 100, eh? We considered it, but in the end we thought that awarding a game a score out of 10 would give readers a better idea of the game's overall quality at a glance. Rating out of 100 may give more room to distinguish between games of similar quality, but what measure determines whether a game gets, say, 73 or 74?

1. The Official Australian PlayStation Magazine is currently published on a quarterly basis.

2. Psygnosis has now decided to cancel the Formula 1 Post Season update disk in favour of a full blown sequel due out at the end of 1997. It is expected to feature the '97 teams and drivers, as well as the new tracks and a few minor improvements such as better crashes and artificial driver intelligence, etc.

DAD WON'T GET OFF!

First things first. My Dad picked up your magazine for me and it's utterly cool. I'm 10 years old and have had a PlayStation for a couple of months now and it's just insane. My favourite games would have to be F1 (Fast, fast, fast), Wipeout (Cool! My dad almost threw up because he played it for four hours non-stop!), Tekken 2 (Not too shabby at all) and Impact Racing (I like shooting bad drivers). The only problem I have with my PlayStation is that my Dad won't get off the thing!! Should I tell him to grow up and act his age (35), or would it be better if I told him to get his own PlayStation so that he doesn't interrupt me when I'm playing?

Now guys, I need some info on the following:

1: When is Sim City 2000 due for release?

2: When is Independence Day due for release?

3: Where can you get the cool Wipeout gear from?

4: This one's from my Dad Is there a PlayStation disc dedicated solely to V-CD as seen on your demo disc and on the Demo One disc that

we got with our PlayStation? Or is this going to be one of those things that just disappears because its application is more of a novelty? My Dad and his friends really enjoy the two V-CD clips we've got, but they want more!

Thanks again for such a great mag

- Justin Corney
Hallam, VIC

Try to talk him into getting an extra PlayStation so you can play link-up games!

1. It's out in the UK, but hasn't been confirmed for release in Australia yet. Don't worry, we want it too and we've been hassling Sony about it on a regular basis.

2. Independence Day is due to be released "1st quarter '97", according to EA's release schedule.

3. For the coolest Wipeout gear you'll have to order it directly from the UK with the catalogue in the Wipeout 2097 instruction booklet.

4. The V-CDs are produced by Psygnosis and, as far as we know, new ones will be produced on an occasional basis for use on future demo CDs such as our own.

NON-SOBER ADULTS

I just purchased your magazine and I already had the brilliant Formula 1. Your overall mark was perfectly spot on. Although 5 for Top Gun: Fire at will wasn't the right mark, or so I think. Your mark for Namco Museum Vol 2 was way too high, even though it was just 4, because all that is a load of crappy fossil games, touched up with new age 3D sections and shovelled onto a black disc.

Even though I've already got Formula 1, I thought Tekken 2, Fade to Black were both good to play on the demo disc and V-CD provided many humorous moments whilst being viewed by non-sober adults. Please keep 'em coming.

- Dean Scanlon
Lara, VIC

You didn't say whether you thought that 5 for Top Gun was too high or too low, but we suspect the latter. Either way, we still think it's crap and that much more can be done with flying games other than tacking a sad FMV sequence onto a tarted up version of After Burner. You may be right about Namco Museum Vol.2, but some people will like it, although it probably depends on your age.

HAPPY TO PAY EXTRA?

Finally! The Ultimate magazine is being produced here in Australia (thankyou). One thing that would make it even better is a hard cover for the CD, I'm sure I'm not the only

person who would be happy to pay the extra cost (please).

A couple of questions for you if I may.

1. Is anyone going to produce a V-CD in the form of a persons head with features that react to the music and lyrics?

2. Are The Simpson's or Tetris coming to the PlayStation in any shape or form, if so when?

3. I believe there's no harm in asking this next question. Can I have a free game? (it was worth a try)

Thanks once more for the mag
- The IMP
Carrum, VIC

Yeah, those paper sleeves are pretty crap, but they're supplied to us with the disk and they'll have to do until we can arrange something better that doesn't cost too much extra - I don't think that the majority of readers would want to pay more.

1. That's a great idea, we can only hope someone takes notice.

2. There is a Tetris game available overseas, but no one's been able to tell us when it's coming to Australia. As for The Simpson's, no games have been announced for the PlayStation as yet, but there's sure to be one eventually.

3. Thought about entering one of our splendid competitions in this issue?

MMMM... MOTORCYCLES

Will there be any games such as Manx TT or Cyber Cycles coming out on the PlayStation?

Also, I can't get the Resident Evil Cheat to work.

- Dazed & Confused
Wembly, Perth

We're still waiting to hear about a proper 500cc GP style motorbike game too! As soon as we find out anything we'll put it in the mag, but in the mean time check out International Moto X, Road Rash and VMX Racing.

Ahh... The good old "I can't get the Resident Evil cheat to work" query. Sorry about that slight error, but we had to give you something to complain about! Miss Nurse may have something to ease the pain.

THINGS ABOUT F1...

Congratulations on a great magazine - and finally a demo disc.

I was interested in your comments on Formula 1. One thing I have noticed is that the motion sometimes freezes for a split second in the middle of a race, which is really annoying. I know of other people who have noticed this. Could Sony explain?

With regards to the Q Sound, I have a music CD that has this and I get the full effect of surround sound, but I can't say the same for F1.

I honestly feel that 'Need For Speed' is a little more realistic than F1. After all, if you hit something in NFS you feel like you've hit something. All you get in F1 is a slight rattling sound.

I enjoyed your interview with Michael Ephraim. Pity you didn't ask him why the PlayStation discs are black, I'm curious to know.

Looking forward to my next copy of your magazine. Keep up the good work.

*Kind regards,
- Cliff Inglis
Christchurch, NZ*

The 'blinking' in F1 is most likely to do with the PlayStation's memory management system which seems to reach its limits when trying to calculate everything that's happening in the race, as well as what's going on on-screen. This does sometimes happen with other games, too.

As for the Q Sound, it offers only a 'simulated' surround sound effect and the results are different for all sorts of music. We've tested it in F1 and it does make a slight difference, but most people won't notice.

PlayStation CDs are black because they look cool. Black dye is injected into one of the layers of clear plastic when the CD is being pressed, that's all there is to it.

NOT JUST A 'CUT & PASTE'

Congratulations on a great first issue. Granted, the format is well established in the UK PlayStation Magazine, but it's such a relief to see an original layout and not just a 'cut & paste' of the UK mag.

Fabulous prizes for the competitions and the cover CD is a great idea too. Since Sony won't rent their games, playable demos are the way to try before you buy. In fact, I bought 'Fade Go Black' on the strength of the first issue CD.

I found very little to fault, except the pages seem a little 'blank' and boy do you guys seriously need a proof reader! But as with all things, I'm sure these teething problems will iron out in no time. (Sorry about the mixed metaphor.)

Now for the inevitable question: Will there be much difference between FIFA '96 and FIFA '97? In particular, will Cantona (legend) still be in the players lists?

*Thanks a lot
- R Edmonds
Noble Park, VIC*

FIFA '97 features a number of major improvements over last year's edition. It's brilliant and

we'll have a full Play Test of it in the next issue and we'll let you know then how good it is. As for Cantona, yes, he is still playing and yes, he is still God.

IN THE BIBLICAL SENSE?

Well it's about bloody time there's an official PlayStation mag in Australia. How the hell are you anyway? Now, as an adult gamer I have a few questions.

1. Now that the PlayStation has been significantly reduced in price, therefore attracting more younger gamers, are we going to see an influx of crap platform games etc, that push aside adult titles?

2. How friendly are you with the boys at Hyper? Not in a biblical sense.

3. I know lots of titles are coming over from the PC. Will Future shock be one of them?

4. I want to see a photo of that saucy wench Miss Nurse before I tell her my problems. If she's got a beard and side burns don't bother.

- From a butler
Caboolture, QLD

Not too bad at all, thank you.

1. Yes and no. There's obviously going to be loads of kiddie games like Crash Bandicoot and Pandemonium hitting the PlayStation, but those in search of more 'sophisticated' entertainment will still be well catered for. Why, this very issue features Command & Conquer, Panzer General, Broken Sword and a number of other titles that are definitely not crap kiddie platform fare.

2. Our friendship with the Hyper boys and, for that matter, the lads at PC PowerPlay, extends only so far as the pub down the road at lunchtime.

3. Future Shock... Hmm, I can't say I've seen it on any distributor's release schedule, but we'll look out for it.

4. Miss Nurse wears no facial hair, just gumboots. She's quite capable of solving most of your gaming troubles, as well as alleviating uncomfortable rashes in awkward places.

LACK OF RPGS?

I'm really pleased that finally an official PlayStation magazine dedicated to one specific console has been released in Australia. The official UK PlayStation magazine was a real let down in my eyes, the writers seemed egotistical and inexperienced and would rather spend their time slagging off the Saturn than bothering to tell you about the PlayStation and its software. Don't get me wrong, I'm ecstatic about my PlayStation but I'm equally excited about the Sega Saturn. I'm really sick of all the console wars and no doubt

your feedback section will overflow with bias remarks.

Please could you answer these questions.

1. There seems to be a distinctive lack of RPG's for the PlayStation, could you name some good ones?

2. I hear Square plans to release over 20 titles on the PlayStation over the next year, is this true?

3. I'm wondering if Capcom's Marvel Superheroes and Street Fighter Alpha 2 will make a successful translation from the arcade to the PlayStation in relation to backgrounds, graphics, animation, etc. Could you shed some light on this?

Thanks for you time, I look forward to future editions of your magazine.

- Sean,
Gladstone, Qld

1. This situation is being rectified with the forthcoming RPGs: Final Fantasy 7, Sentient, Kings Field, Warhammer and a no doubt many others further down the track.

2. 20 titles does sound a bit ambitious, and keep in mind that the majority of these would be for the Japanese market only. High quality titles like Toba No.1, Final Fantasy 7 and Bushido Blade are only going to appear every few months, and there's no guarantee that they'll all be released in Australia.

3. Marvel Super Heroes is unlikely to make it to the PlayStation, but Street Fighter Alpha 2 is out now and is as close to the arcade version as you're likely to see.

BUGGY BOY

Hooray, at last we have our own 100% PlayStation magazine in Australia! Hooray, now I no longer have to put up with the imbecilic, brown nosing morons who write in to Hyper. Is it a pre-requisite for letters appearing in your sister mag?

Now onto matters of importance. I have been a game freak since the old Hanimex 'two sticks and a square dot' console, through the Intellivision, A2600, C64, NES (and on and on, etc... -ed.). Call me weird, but I enjoyed playing Buggy Boy on the C64 and A500 more than Formula 1 on the PlayStation. Sure, the graphics, sound and options aren't a patch on F1's, but it had that one essential element without which a game is only a piece of software - PLAYABILITY. Yes, I loved the graphics, the tunes are unbelievable and there are enough options for everyone, but why did I trade F1 in after only a week and a half? BORING. It was damned boring, not even a Champagne cork to pop after completing the game! It's realistic as

buggerly, but what is there to keep me coming back? NOTHING! I give it a 7 for serious racing enthusiasts only. And yes, I still play Buggy Boy.

*Oh yeah, like the mag, pretty cool.
- Matt,
Hornsby, NSW*

We'll take you up on your offer to call you weird, buggy boy. We agree that sometimes the old games are still the best and that a lot of new games with fancy graphics do seem to miss the point, ie. fun. However, we do disagree on your assessment of Formula 1. Yes, the sport can be dead boring at times (as anyone who tries to stay up late at night watching a race telecast will agree), but as we have said, anyone after a comprehensive F1 game will not find a better offering. If you are still happy playing Buggy Boy, so be it, as it's not for us to tell you which games you will or won't like (personal preference dictates this), only whether they're good or bad.

MILLIONAIRES?

OK, good one on the new magazine, about time we got a PlayStation only publication. But the \$10.95 I paid in the newsagent??? Is everyone out there bar me a millionaire, or what? While I appreciate that the cost of that demo-disc adds on, hey c'mon, it's more than twice the price of Hyper.

Well you asked for letters and opinions about the 1st issue, and I'll by gosh supply some. Firstly, I am by no means an average reader, being 40+ and living and working in an extremely isolated area of the bush. The point is that people living out here like me rely almost entirely on reviews to decide which games are worth buying or not. To get into the nearest 'try and buy' store takes a 700km drive, thusly magazines and mail order stores are our lifeline. So keep it honest, huh? If something sucks, say so, official mag or not.

You gave Formula 1 a perfect 10? Yeah right! OK, it's the best racing game to date on any system, but what are you going to do if for instance, Indy Car racing turns out even better? Give it an 11? Things we don't like about F1: you can't put yourself behind the wheel - who wants to win a hard-fought race as someone else, for Christ's sake? Murray Walker gets right up your nose after the first half hour, and if you want to turn him off you have to reset and start all over.

What else bugs us about the PlayStation system? The abysmal loading time. It's a pain. When you're used to instant access of cartridge machines. Even PCs boot up in half the time, why so?

All up we thought your 1st issue

FEEDBACK

was bright, informative, and well presented. Please keep up the high editorial standard, and please, please avoid the trap that magazines like Hyper seem to be falling into regarding the sometimes infantile content of their articles. I mean, if someone gets that excited about a game review that they feel the uncontrollable urge to "wet their pants" or "kack themselves", to quote recent examples, then it's a personal problem and we don't want to know about it!

Regards,
- Bob, Kym & The Rugrats,
Katherine, NT

While it's easy for us to become rather jaded by the vast number of games we see every week, we do try to remember that you guys have to spend your hard earned cash on them and getting stuck with a crap game isn't much fun at all - we've all been in this position at least once, not just with games but any product.

We gave F1 a 10 because we believe that it's the best game of its sort currently available, especially when you see what the competition has to offer. Yes, it has its share of faults - all games do - but what it sets out to achieve it does so in an exemplary manner. It will be just as enjoyable to play in one year or five years from now, even when the sequel comes out. If there is something better (and there always will be) we'll let you know, but as for Nascar and Andretti, they don't even come close.

Loading times are a right pain in the arse, but it's something we all have to live with until more programmers get their act together. Tosal No.1 is an excellent example of how loading times can be hidden so as not to interrupt the flow of the game.

FEELS A BIT FOOLISH

Bravo! Your debut edition was first rate, I read it from cover to cover. Speaking of covers, the CD attached to the front of the magazine was brilliant (still is actually). Tekken 2 is, in my humble opinion, the pinnacle of all things pugilistic. The demo on the disk saw my jaw come precariously close to terra firma. The movement of the characters is so realistic I found myself grinning at the sheer beauty of it. Even when you are getting hammered, you have to admire the graceful, visually pleasing way your opponent goes about it.

F1 proved to be an enjoyable driving experience, although I found the graphics to be a little on the gloomy side. I can see myself purchasing both of these games and it was the chance to sample them

that helped the decision.

I would like to put forward some questions that I think could improve the magazine. The first thing is, I am 31 years old (young?) and I loathe having to go into a newsagency to buy a magazine that has a blown picture of some cartoonish looking character on the cover. I know it sounds pretentious, but I feel a bit foolish. It's just a point which I feel is important and I wonder how many more mature console players feel the same way. I know that these characters are valid parts of the console scene but they do give a childish impression.

The reviews could be a little bit more in depth. That's not to say I thought they were shallow, I just think a bit more detail of the feel of the game and the little touches that give the game its atmosphere. We, the buying public, rely on these insights to help us decide on what's worth spending our hard earned cash on.

Anyway, congratulations on a great publication that I reckon defecates all over the pommie opposition. I am looking forward to the next edition.

P.S. Sorry this was so long winded. Oh, thanks for the Doom cheats.

Your sincerely,
- Luke Scott,
Sylvania, NSW

Our first demo disk has proved to be immensely popular with readers as your letter and many others testify. We believe this is the best way for people to decide whether to buy a game or not and we hope you enjoy the one stuck on the front of this issue.

I hope the quality and quantity of reviews in this issue is to your liking, our reviewers spent many a sleepless night chained to their PlayStations until Skull the Slave Master was satisfied!

ANALOGUE SUPPORT

I am writing mainly to direct the attentions of game developers to the analogue Negcon controller. I bought one for racing games but I can't get over the lack of support for it in games like Alien Trilogy and Doom where analogue controls for turning, strafing and movement would be very useful. It seems to be obvious, but I don't think anyone's tried it yet. Maybe Quake or Tenka could feature Negcon support.

As an official magazine, hopefully you can offer accurate estimates on the local release of games. Do you have any information of Mechwarrior 2 and Quake?

- S. Jenkin,
Dunoon, NSW

You be pleased to know that more and more new games are

providing support for analogue controllers, some recent examples include Formula 1, Wipeout 2097 and Destruction Derby 2. As for Doom type games, analogue support comes in the form of the PlayStation mouse which works brilliantly and adds an extra dimension to the way you play the game. Final Doom supports the mouse and we'll let you know about Tenka and Quake when we get them

Release dates can change from day to day. For example, Die Hard Trilogy was originally intended to be on sale back in October, but was held up until late November. Mechwarrior 2 is due out towards the end of February but we've heard nothing new about PlayStation Quake.

STEAMING HORSE DROPPINGS

I was wondering if you could tell me whether Sony will be releasing a horse racing game or an AFL game in the near future.

There is currently a horse racing game on PC called Hooches Of Thunder which is fantastic. It's the ideal horse racing fanatics game. You are the owner of the horses and pick a trainer and a jockey... (Enough! I do not require further information! - ed.) ...possibly an Australian version with the Melbourne Cup... (STOP!)

- Damien Ruitenberg,
Albury, NSW

Horses racing games have always been quite popular in Japan but haven't really found a market anywhere else. I wonder why. No news on an AFL game either, sorry.

RIPPED OFF!

I recently bought first edition of your magazine, full of good honest reviews and all the video game news I need. Well done.

However, I am sorry to say that you have deceived me. The main reason I bought the magazine was for the demo of Formula 1. Although I already had a demo of F1 I thought I'd buy yours, thinking I'd have two different tracks to entertain myself on and have money left over to buy Crash Bandicoot. The pictures in the demo CD guide are of a different track to the demo. It is exactly the same as the other one. I just thought it would be a lot wiser to publish pictures of the actual demo when describing it in future, as I was pretty disappointed.

Once again, congratulations on a brilliant magazine (almost).

Yours sincerely,
- Ramon Carey,
Strathfieldsaye, Vic

We apologise if we misled you,

but at the time we went to press we hadn't actually seen a copy of the disk. In fact, for a while we were having nightmares that the F1 demo would be replaced by a crappy pinball game! The same thing has happened with this issue's disk (which still hasn't arrived as I write this, precariously close to deadline).

The point with demo disks is to give you an idea of whether you like the game enough to buy it. As you obviously do like it, we suggest you purchase it post haste and experience what the full game has to offer.

RABID BANDICOOT

Firstly I'd like to say how much I was impressed by your first issue. It had everything a PlayStation fanatic could ask for in infinite detail. And the demo disk! How impressive!

Anyway I do have a question. In your review of Crash Bandicoot you said that Crash wasn't going to be Sony's mascot. Well, who is? Who is going to do for Sony what Mario and Sonic did for Nintendo and Sega? Anyway, keep the good work up.

Catch you later,
- Ian Marshall,
Perth, WA

Although Sony didn't plan it, Crash has become the unofficial mascot for the PlayStation due to his sheer popularity. The rabid bandicoot has been popping all across Australia and there seems no stopping him!

SUPERIOR BRAINS?

Congratulations! Finally an Australian PlayStation magazine for the PlayStation owners of Australia and it comes with a great demo disk. Your first issue was great with great reviews and intelligent reviewers for a change.

The head to head section is a good feature that is new and extremely helpful when choosing a game from a difficult selection. I have a few questions that I hope your superior brains can answer.

1. Is it true that Capcom has had a falling out with Sony and therefore Resident Evil 2 will be out only for the Saturn?

2. Will classic games like Point Blank and Crypt Killer be coming to the PlayStation?

3. Is there a release date for Quake?
4. If you reviewed Megaman X3 on the Super NES would it score higher than 6?

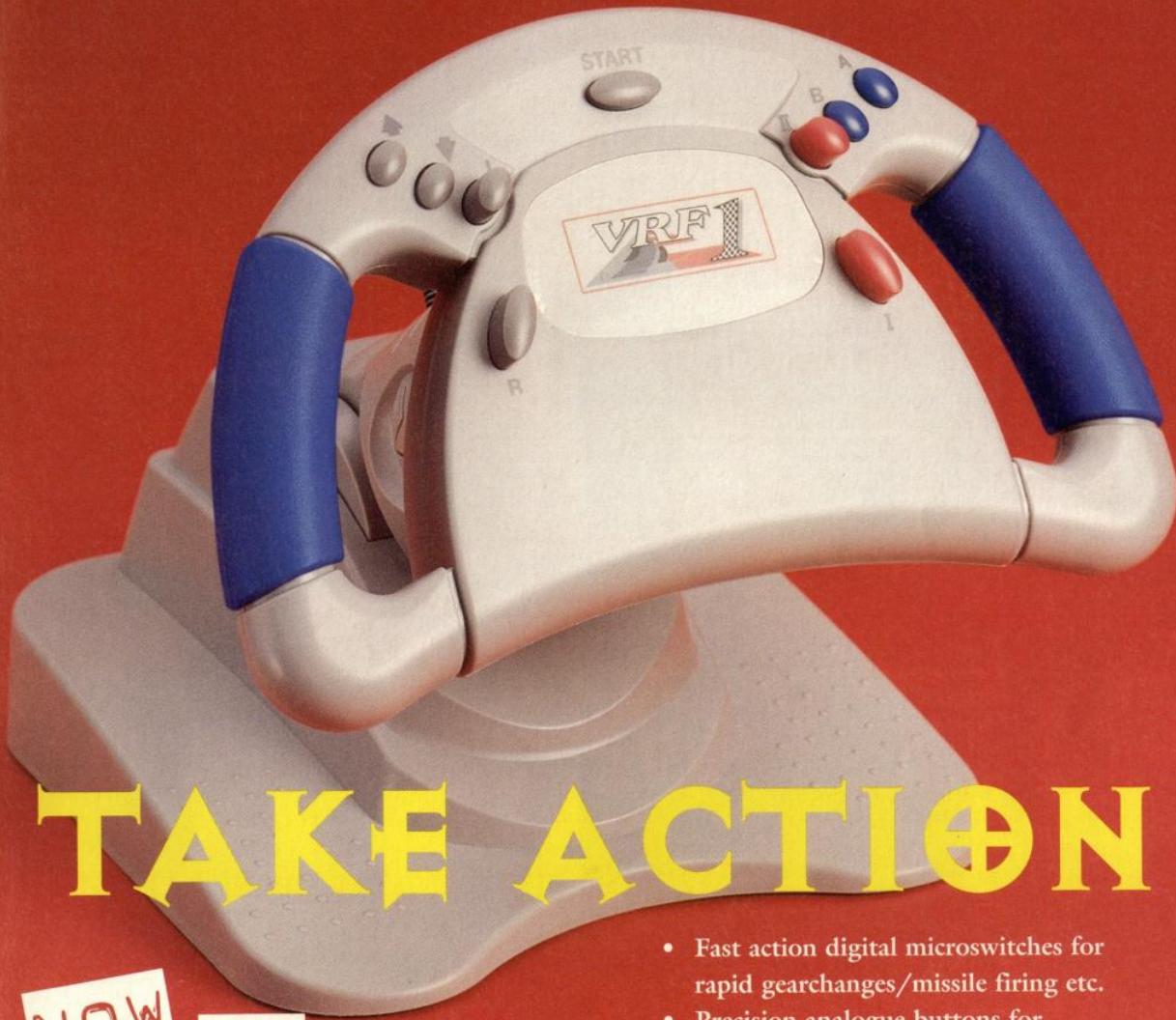
Thanks for the mag and I believe Hyper will be getting a little hot under the collar. Keep the quality coming and good luck!

- Luke Martin,
East Keilor, Vic

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RESIDENT EVIL

Oops. It appears that the Resident Evil cheats we printed last issue were slightly incorrect. False, no less, and perhaps even misleading. So to make up for it we're printing a extended Resident Evil tips guide which should definitely help you put to rest those zombies. Once again, we humbly apologise for our misdeeds.

Rocket Launcher

Gaining access to the rocket launcher from the start of the game is not an easy feat. First of all you have to finish the game in under three hours, otherwise the cheat won't work. Done that? Good, now you'll be able to save the rocket launcher to your inventory and when you start the game those legions of undead won't have a chance.

Different Clothes

Once again you'll have to finish the game before this cheat works. Once completed the special key will be in your inventory and it will allow you to open the locked door in the wardrobe and enter the closet. From here you'll have access to a new set spiffy evening wear. You'll look just fabulous!

Sun Crest

When you're in the armour room on the second floor, push the two statues over the floor air vents. Then press the button on the ground and the cabinet down the end of the room will open, and there lies the crest.

Wind Crest

Go to the dining room on the second floor and push the statue off the balcony. The blue gem now lies in the shattered ruins, collect it and take it to the tiger statue room on the first floor and put it into the eye socket. The statue moves and the wind crest appears.

Star Crest

In the large gallery on the first floor is a series of paintings. Go to each painting and press the buttons in the following order: new born, infant, lively boy, young man, middle-aged man, then old man. Once done, go to the end painting and press the final button to get the crest.

Moon Crest

The moon crest is hidden up in the

attic. In here you'll find a rather large snake, either kill it or run around it and grab the crest. Easy!

Making the V-Jolt

Your chemistry lesson starts here, so pay attention. Only Rebecca can make the V-jolt, so if you're playing as Chris here's what you have to do.

- Go to the door with the keypad inside the bee hive passage and play around with the button sequence until you turn on all the lights.
- Enter the drug storeroom, look around then go back out.
- When you come up against Plant 42, Chris will automatically throw the V-Jolt report to Rebecca and you then take control of her.
- Go back to the drug storeroom and pick up the four empty bottles. The key to the ingredients is:
- 1 - Water (from the sink)
- 2 - UMB (from the shelves across from the sink)
- 4 - UMB No.4 (from the shelves at the far side of the room)
- Fill one bottle with 1, fill another bottle with 2 and mix them together to make 3.
- Fill a bottle with 4 and mix it with 3 to make 7.
- Now fill a bottle with 2 and then fill another with 4, then mix them together to make 13.
- Fill one bottle with 1, fill another bottle with 2 and mix them together to make 3.
- Finally mix 13 with 3 and you'll have the V-Jolt.

- Go down to the security room in the basement and use the V-Jolt on the roots poking through the ceiling to make them wither.
- When Rebecca leaves the room, Plant 42 attacks Chris and now you're back in control of him to finish the plant off for good.

Logging on to the computer

The required log-on name is JOHN, the first password is ADA and the final password is MOLE.

Disk locations

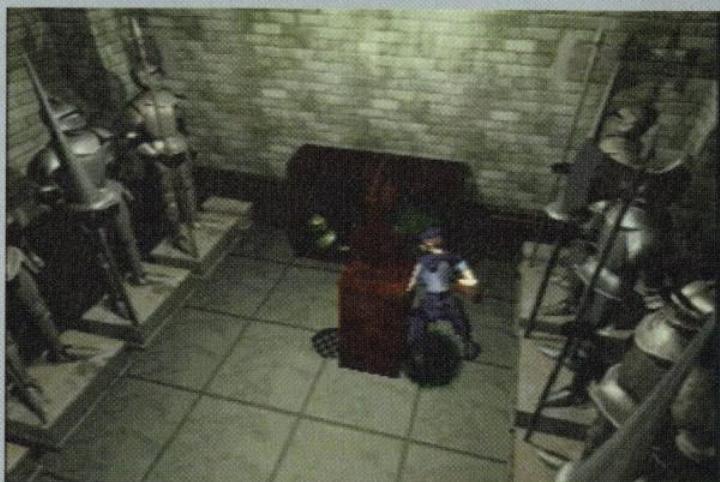
- Disk 1 - In the hidden room in library B.
- Disk 2 - Behind the huge rock in Crank passage.
- Disk 3 - On the desk by the stairs in the laboratory.

Terminal locations

- Terminal 1 - Inside private room A.
- Terminal 2 - Inside the mortuary.
- Terminal 3 - Inside power maze 3.

Starting the elevator

The elevator takes you down to the final battle with Tyrant, but first you have to get it working. To do this you'll need to go to the power panel in the first room of the power maze. Go to the south west corner of the room and restore the power to the darkened areas, then go down to the last room in the power maze and use





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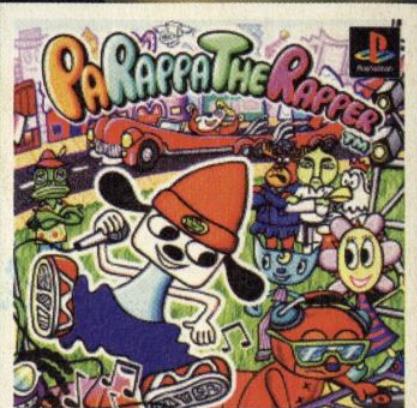
GAMES ONLINE

NEXT ISSUE

Next Issue...

We've got so much cool stuff lined up for next issue that we don't know where to start! Life Force Tenka, Resident Evil 2, Soul Blade, Porsche Challenge, Monster Truck Rally, Twisted Metal 2, Spider and heaps more will be awaiting your perusal in the next fantabulous issue.

Issue three of The Official Australian PlayStation Magazine will be hitting the shelves mid March, and you'd better be quick to avoid missing out!



Here's one crazy-ass Japanese game that you won't be seeing in the next issue!

Copthis



These cops are animals. And they shoot to thrill. Preview Firo & Klawd at www.bmg.com.au



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WIPEOUT 2097

PlayStation

The Official Australian PlayStation Magazine

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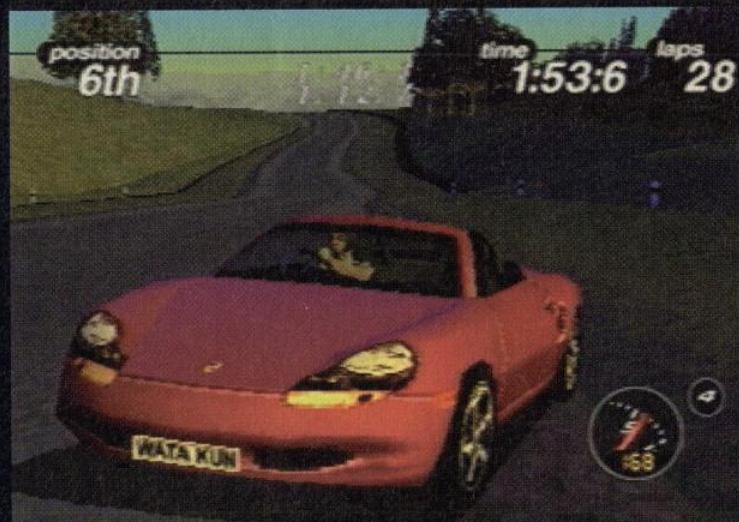
This issue's complimentary CD contains no less than seven exclusive demos of the latest and upcoming PlayStation titles.

Porsche Challenge

Rolling Demo

PUBLISHER: Sony CATEGORY: Early 97

This is Sony's big driving game for '97 and it looks very special, indeed. This demo is not pre-rendered video footage, instead the PlayStation is actually processing everything, including the drivers' artificial intelligence, in real-time.

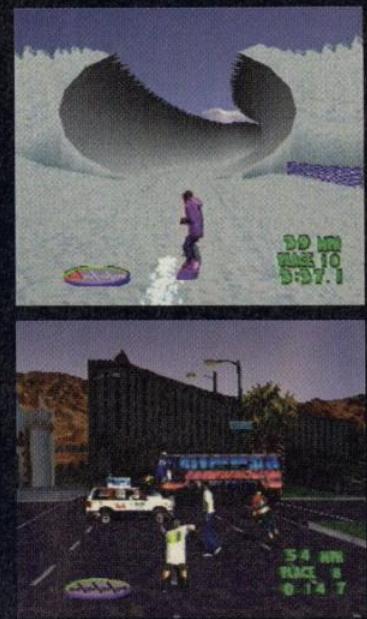


2 Extreme

Playable Demo

PUBLISHER: Sony CATEGORY: Early 97

If you drink lots of fizzy brain tonic and like to yell out "Yo dude!", "Gnarly, man!" and "Siiick!!" at every opportunity, then you'll probably be interested in the sequel to Extreme Games. Mindless fun at its best!



Actua Golf

Playable Demo

PUBLISHER: Sony CATEGORY: Out Now



As you'll see when you turn to our head to head comparison of golf games, Actua Golf will be celebrating victory in the clubhouse while the others are struggling in the sand trap.

Tomb Raider

Rolling Demo

PUBLISHER: Core CATEGORY: December

After seeing this amazing game in action your gob will be well and truly smacked! Watch the demo, read the review - can you live without Lara? We think not!



Street Racer

Playable Demo

PUBLISHER: Ubi Soft CATEGORY: December

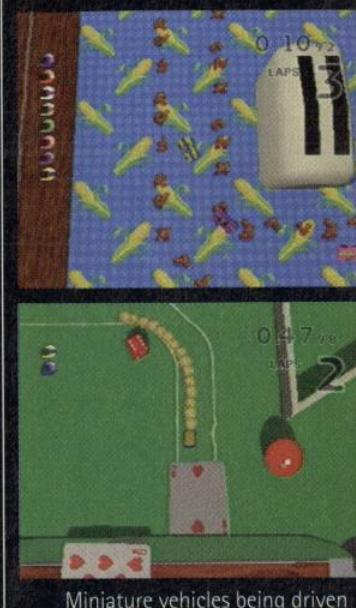


Initial impressions can often be deceptive, and if you've dismissed Street Racers as 'just another silly racing game' after seeing the screen shots with our review in this issue, then you'll be missing out on a lot of fun. Go on, give it a burl!

Micro Machines 3

Rolling Demo

PUBLISHER: Codemasters CATEGORY: Early 97



Miniature vehicles being driven around household areas is a curious subject for a game, but as you will see from this demo it looks like a lot of fun!

Time Commando

Playable Demo

PUBLISHER: Activision CATEGORY: Out Now

We reviewed this in our last issue where it scored a credible 8 out of ten. Time Commando has some of the most beautiful graphics you'll ever see in a video game, and you can see for yourself with this tantalising sample.

